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Stories of the Red Cross
by Mrs. L. T. Meade &
Clifford Halifax

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**Stories of the Red Cross by Mrs. L. T. Meade and Clifford Halifax
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1. A Sister of the Red Cross - July 1897
2. Dick the Devil - August 1897
3. "La France" - September 1897
4. Major Capell's Honour - October 1897
5. For Valour - November 1897
6. The Drummer Boy - December 1897



Being the Strange Adventures of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

NO. I.—A SISTER OF THE ROYAL
RED CROSS.

This story is substantially true, and was furnished by an officer in the Indian Staff Corps, who was serving with Sikh troops.

IN my rough and adventurous life I have come across many queer scenes. More than once I have been to the front and have not only beheld the comrades I loved best in the flush of victory, but also in the moment of defeat. I have stood by these heroes in the hour of death and taken their last messages, and soothed their dying pangs. It has been my lot to witness deeds which might well cause the blood to freeze with horror, and yet again to behold such heroic achievements, as must, when I remember them, bring the water to my eyes and make my heart course proudly. I am but a plain soldier, and can only tell an unvarnished tale, but of these things I speak from actual experience.

Their wedding bells will ring to-morrow, and here in my hut at Watu, not far from Zanzibar, I should like to tell as briefly as I can their story.

Charlie Vereker was a prime favourite with all who knew him. Belonging to a crack regiment it was not long before he got a billet as an A.D.C. This brought him to headquarters, and, being keen to find some more active employment, he worried the authorities till he got attached to a regiment of Sikhs,

who were being sent to one of the African Protectorates to assist in suppressing the slave trade.

It was at Watu, therefore, that I first met him, and never did I take a greater fancy to anyone. He was a devil-may-care sort of lad, with a sparkle in the eye, and a bright, upright, free carriage. There was no one better for telling a rollicking story than Charlie, and no one more full of sympathy in times of perplexity and trouble. It did one's heart good to listen to his laugh, his song was worth coming any distance to hear, his step was as light as a schoolboy's, and his face as free from care as if there were no sorrow in the whole world.

There was no daring achievement in which Charlie did not have his share. A scrape delighted him, the moment of hair-breadth danger was also the moment of glory for him. The lad was all alive with enthusiasm, a crack shot, a brave soldier, a boy to be proud of; there was nothing his friends would not do for him.

Watu is about as dull a station as can be found on the face of the earth, and it needed all Charlie's high spirits to keep us in good humour, and when he was suddenly sent off

by the Commissioner to Fort Macpherson, we missed him sorely. He was away for a fortnight and walked quietly into my hut at the end of that time just as if he had not been absent for an hour. His face had been sunshiny enough when he went away, and it was sunshiny still, although there was a change in it. It looked a bit thoughtful now, and also a trifle anxious. In the midst of his gay stories he would drop off into a reverie, and hum the refrain of a song under his breath.

I looked at him occasionally, guessing that something had occurred, but unable to believe that the lad could have met the woman who was to be all the world to him in such an out-of-the-way spot as Fort Macpherson. Still his symptoms pointed to the ordinary thing, and I waited with curiosity for the development of events. These were to occur all too quickly.

On the very next day we were electrified with horror by the news that the Arabs had made a raid on the Dutch Settlement at Fort Macpherson, had killed Mr. and Mrs. Wallace, the missionary and his wife, and also a young English nurse, a sister of Mrs. Wallace, who happened to be staying with her. This girl belonged to the Army Nursing Staff, was off duty, and had come to Mrs. Wallace for a short time from Egypt. Several of the servants of the mission station were also murdered; in fact, the raid meant complete extermination.

In our horror none of us specially noticed Charlie, who was as keen as anyone in getting information, and rushing here, there, and everywhere in order to expedite the sending of a force to avenge the missionaries. Two days afterwards, however, I met him, and was struck by the change in his face. It was simply awful; he looked nearly twenty years older, the fun had gone out of him, the quality of his voice had altered; it was just as if something had broken his heart by one fell clap.

If he had been reserved in the days of his high spirits, he was still more shut into himself now. You could not get him to give a word of explanation to save his life. It was not that he did not go through his duties with his usual determination; he

neglected nothing, was always to the fore, and had a cheerful, ringing word for his men, but something had gone out of the lad, and he was an old man before his time.

One burning hot day, about a week after the news of the raid on the missionary settlement had reached us, as I was strolling towards the Sikhs' lines, Vereker came to my side. He slipped his hand through my arm and began to speak with something like his old verve.

"It's all right at last, Dale," he cried. "I have got it! I have got it!"

"What do you mean?" I asked, turning round and facing him in my surprise.

"Why, man, the charge of the expedition. I am made again, I can breathe—and Dale, old fellow, you are to come with us, that is the best of it. You'll get your orders in an hour or so; we are to be off at dawn."

"But where?" I asked.

"Up the country, of course, in order to get rid of the most accursed beggars on the face of the earth."

"Do you mean the Arabs?" I asked. "Are we to avenge the murders at Fort Macpherson?"

His colour faded, he bit his lips; then, making a great effort, he pulled himself together.

"That's about it," he said, with a nod.

"There's something up with you, Charlie," I exclaimed. "You had much better make a clean breast of it. Remember, when all is said and done that I am your doctor."

"I am all right, Dale," he replied.

"Not in your mind," I answered.

"For God's sake don't question me; there is something the matter, but I can't talk of it. We are in for a glorious bit of active fighting, and as I told you I feel that I can breathe again. You and I, Dale, will be the only Englishmen of the party; our force will consist of a few Sikhs and fifty of our best Silicaris. The fact is I was nearly mad to get this business, and now it is put into my hands. I cannot stay another moment to talk over matters, for there is a good deal to be done, but we shall meet at daybreak."

He rushed off, scarcely waiting for me to reply. I thought for a moment, and then determined to go at once to see the Com-

missioner. As soon as he saw me he spoke about the expedition.

"You would like to go with Vereker?" he said.

"Certainly," I replied.

"Well, I believe you can be spared; we can get on here quite well with our two native hospital assistants, so if you care to go, you are welcome. You have had bad luck in missing the last business against the Mangani tribe."

I signified my satisfaction with this arrangement, and the Commissioner, giving me a keen glance, continued:

"The fact is I am particularly glad that a surgeon should go with the force, for I have noticed for the last few days that Vereker is not himself; I don't believe he is well."

"I am certain he is not," I answered. "Why, his face, with that sort of scared look, is the subject of talk wherever I turn. I cannot make out what is up."

"It has something to do with that raid against the missionaries," continued the Commissioner.

"Vereker happened to be with me when the news came. He uttered an exclamation just as if someone had shot him, turned dead white, walked to the window, but in a moment recovered himself. He asked every particular in a strained, quiet voice, and showed not a scrap more emotion, but I have observed a great difference in him since. He has moved heaven and earth to get charge of this expedition, and I believe if any man here can do for the Arabs, he is the one."

At a very early hour on the following

morning Vereker and I, with his small force, were under way. I was most anxious that he should take me into his confidence, but I saw quickly that he had no intention of doing so. He was reserved, and at the same time excited, bursting into hilarity and high spirits one moment, and the next sinking into profound gloom. The hurry of movement, however, and the abundance of occupation which he had in getting his men thoroughly under organisation did much for him. He

worked us all exceptionally hard, and scarcely gave us the necessary time for rest.

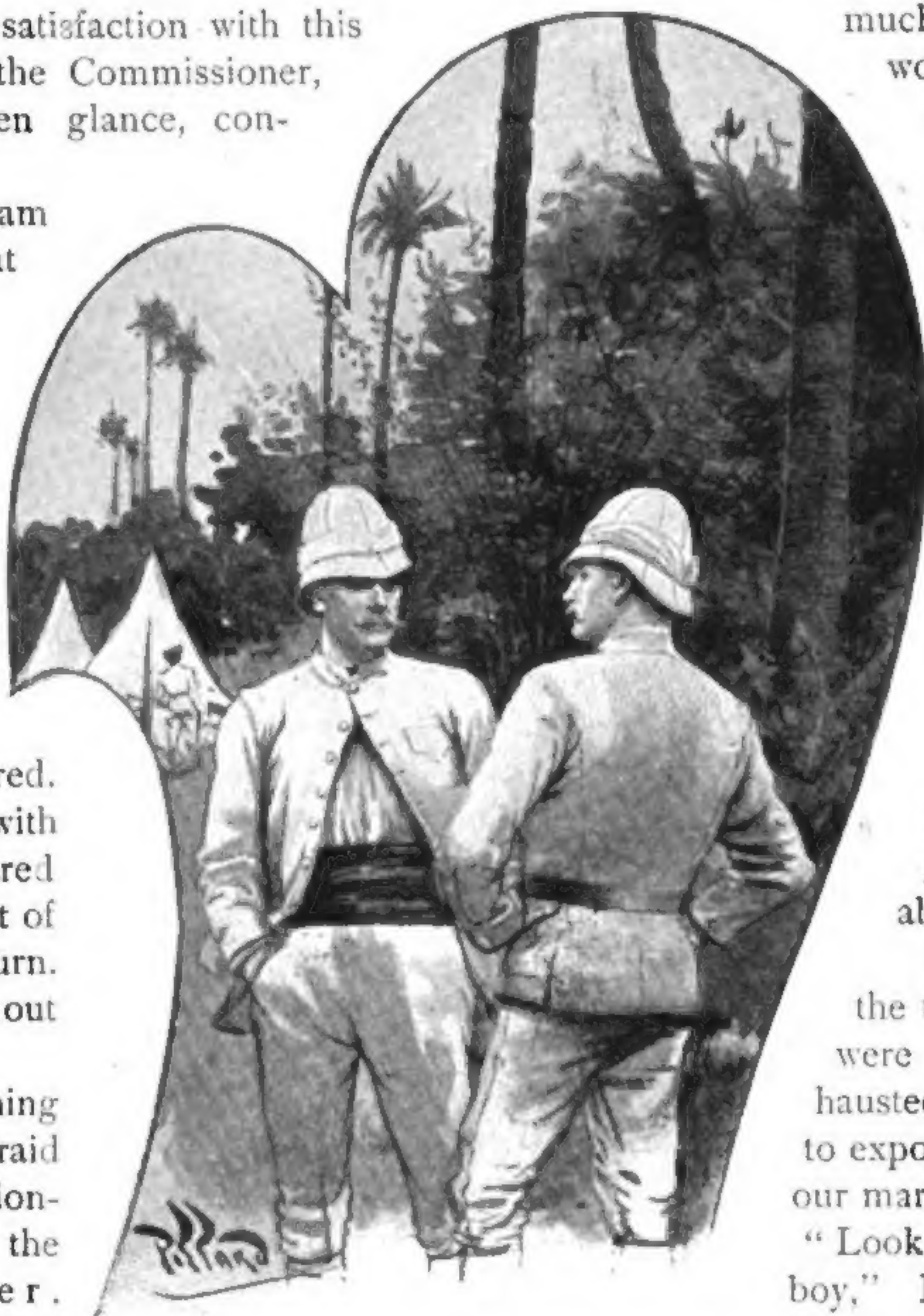
There was no chance of our getting on the trail of the Arabs for several days, but when we got well into Matutiland Vereker hoped to find some natives who would give us information with regard to their whereabouts.

On the evening of the third day, when we were all thoroughly exhausted, I thought it time to expostulate at the rate of our march.

"Look here, Charlie, my boy," I said; "you are doing all this thing far too quickly. You will just knock yourself up and then where shall we be?"

"I shall not knock up," he answered, kicking away some pebbles restlessly with his boot. "My God! Dale, there is no fatigue on earth that would affect me at a time like the present."

"Nevertheless," I said, eyeing him keenly, "you look very like knocking up at the present moment." Here I took his hand. "Why, man," I exclaimed, "your temperature is much above normal even now!"



"We are in for a glorious bit of active fighting."



We were obliged to cut our way through this forest.

"I am as well as possible," he answered.

"You must allow me to be the best judge of that. No man can live without food without sleep. All work and no play was never yet meant for the human race."

"I don't want to be hard on the rest of you," said Vereker; "but the fact is I cannot rest. I must push forward—I don't believe Dale, that I am quite myself just now."

"That you are not," I thought, but I forbore to question him further.

The next day we entered a thick belt of forest, and found ourselves beyond all trace of civilisation. The villages were few and far between, and we had to subsist mostly on cooked meats, rice, Indian corn, with an occasional antelope which we were lucky enough to shoot. The air in the forest was dank and heavy. The place was carpeted with great blossoms of orange, white, and crimson as big as cups. These had fallen from the flowering trees over our heads. We were obliged to cut our way through this forest, and were all more or less affected by the miasma which rose from the ground.

"I wish I could climb to the top of one of those trees and have a good blow," I said one evening to Vereker.

"I doubt if you would get fresh air, even if you could," he answered. "It is most unlucky," he continued, "that we cannot get a trace of the natives; if we did we should soon find ready-made paths. We shall be days going through the place at this rate."

"If we are you will be down with fever," I said.

"I am ill now," he replied very quietly.

"Ah, you confess it at last," I said.

He staggered slightly towards me, turning white as death. The next moment I laid him on the grass, and called his orderly to my side.

"Get my brandy flask," I said. I opened it, poured a small quantity into a cup, mixed it with water, and gave it to the poor fellow. He drained it off, and then turned to me, shaking all over, but with words of apology on his lips.

"These beastly shivers do take it out of one," he said. "I hate myself for giving way. I thought when once I had got the lead of this expedition that the hope"—he stopped abruptly, his lips quivering—"I hoped I should be all right," he continued; "well, I suppose I am in for it."

"Put this into your mouth," I said, taking

out my clinical thermometer. He did what he was bid. I found, as I had feared, that fever had undoubtedly set in; his temperature was 105.

"Now, my boy," I said, "if you don't obey directions you will be down with a sharp attack. I am going to cover you up with blankets and give you some anti-pyrine. We will light fires here and encamp for the night. If you are not better in the morning, we ought to return to Watu."

"I'll do all you want me to do to-night, Dale," he answered, "but as to going back,

"There is; but I cannot talk of it," he replied. "We must go forward at all hazards, Dale. My miserable life is not of the slightest consequence. I will stay here for the night. A machila can be hastily constructed, and, if necessary, some of the carriers can push on with me to-morrow."

"Well, well, do as you wish," I replied; "but now no more talking; you want a good sleep and you shall soon have one."

As I spoke I piled blankets over him, ordered large fires to be lit immediately, and sat with him for the remainder of the night.



I poured a small quantity into a cup, and gave it to the poor fellow.

that is not to be thought of for a single moment. Remember, I am still in command, and on we must go. Dale, you'll give me your assurance that, in any case, you will proceed?"

"I will see about that," I replied. "If I put you on the sick list, you will be no longer in command."

"Aye, but I won't be put on the sick list," he said, with an attempt at a laugh, which soon faded.

"Vereker," I said—I knelt by him and spoke in a whisper;—"why don't you give me your confidence? There is something at the bottom of this."

He was undoubtedly in for a sharp attack of malarial fever, and I thought that the chance of his recovery, going through this damp forest, which was in many places pure swamp, was but slight. At the same time I saw by his glittering eyes, the flush on his cheeks, and his intense nervous excitement, that if we gave up the expedition he would die from a sort of heartbreak. Some deep sorrow was eating into the lad's soul, and until he was relieved there was a poor chance of his getting much better.

Early in the morning we rigged up a machila, hanging it from a horizontal pole,

which we cut from some of the overhanging trees. This pole was carried on the shoulders of four native carriers, Vereker was placed in it, and we began to move again at a rapid rate. We were soon fortunate enough to strike a path, and hoped that we might get traces of some of the natives.

My patient's illness increased with terrible rapidity. His temperature rose to 106, and once nearly approached 107, but, strange to say, the delirium which usually accompanies such attacks did not set in. I almost wished it would. The worst cases of malarial fever are often without delirium, and from the first I thought badly of Vereker. I had no ice with me, and few of the ordinary appliances for giving him relief. When the fever subsided I dosed him with quinine; when it returned I gave him plenty of anti-pyrine.

His orderly and I did all in our power for his comfort; but marching through this dreadful forest, where insects of all sorts abound, where the damp, hot air makes it almost impossible to breathe, was enough in itself to kill the poor fellow. I waited anxiously for the moment when delirium should set in, and doubted much the expediency of the half promise which I had given him to go on at all hazards. Although so ill, he was evidently full of intense anxiety, and this fact may have partly prevented his losing consciousness. As I walked by his side his watchful eyes followed each of my movements.

At last, to our great relief, we left the forest, and found ourselves in open country. Here, although the air was hot, it was much fresher, and Vereker felt its influence at once. We decided to rest on a ridge. I desired the carriers to lift him out of the machila, and laid him on the grass, which was warm and dry. Our boys prepared a hasty meal, and I was just about to attack a plate of tinned meat when an exclamation from one of the force caused me to raise my head.

A moment before the country had been completely deserted, not a living soul in sight; but now, as if they had risen out of the ground, we saw ourselves surrounded by hundreds of natives. They poured in from every direction, soon increasing to what I should think must have been a thousand

men, women, and children. They surrounded us quickly, sitting down and watching us as we ate with imperturbable good humour and keen interest. I don't believe that Vereker even saw them: he lay with his eyes shut, and scarcely spoke.

I was just about to send an interpreter into the midst of the crowd on the chance of getting news of the Arabs, when we saw two men running towards us from the adjacent hills. They were naked to the waist, of a different build, stouter and larger than the tribe who had come out to see us. Our interpreter, who was a mission boy from Fort Macpherson, came at once to my side.

"Those men bring news," he said, "they are scouts from another tribe."

"Go and meet them and find out what they want," I answered.

He was off immediately, coming back in a few moments with a queer, startled expression all over his face. He beckoned to me to go aside with him, and began to speak eagerly.

An Arab caravan was stationed about fifteen miles distant. The scouts were members of the Awembi tribe, and their village was called Kitura. They were full of alarm, not to say terror, and regarded us already as their deliverers. They said the Arabs had taken possession of the village about ten days ago, had formed a stockade in their midst, and were collecting numbers of men, women, and children from the neighbouring tribes, binding them fast as slaves, and securing them with *gori* sticks. They had already captured a couple of hundred slaves, and intended to make Kitura their centre until they had obtained a sufficient number to make it worth their while to take them to the coast.

As the interpreter was telling me this news, I was startled to hear Vereker's voice.

"We must take care that the whole thing is not a plant," he said in a quiet tone.

I had not the slightest idea that he had overheard a word. He was sitting up.

"Come here," he said to the interpreter.

The man approached him, trembling with excitement, his eyes dancing in his head.

"Go at once and ask those men if they will guide us to Kitura," said Vereker. As he spoke his frame shook with sudden ague.



The scouts were each secured to a stalwart-looking Sikh.

"Good God, man!" I cried, "you are not fit for this business."

"Not a word, Dale," he said; "if this thing is not a plant we must march for Kitura within an hour."

"It will kill you," I said.

"I am still in command of this expedition, and cannot brook interference," was the answer.

The hot flush on his face and the glitter in his eyes warned me not to irritate him further, and at that moment the Mission boy returned. He said that he was quite certain the scouts were true men; they were only too anxious to guide us to Kitura.

"Go back and tell them the conditions," said Vereker. "Each man is to be tied to a

Sikh, and on the smallest show of treachery will be shot on the spot."

The interpreter hastened away and soon returned with the information that the scouts had agreed to our terms.

We now hastily prepared to continue our march, we packed our belongings and were quickly under way. The scouts from Kitura were each secured to a stalwart-looking Sikh, and in this fashion we turned abruptly to our left, and plunged once more into the depths of the almost impenetrable forest.

I had noticed ever since his communication with the Awembi a queer and eager expression about the face of the Mission boy. Now, as we marched forward, he made a sign to me to drop behind. As soon as I did so, he put his hand into his pocket and drew something out.

"One of the Awembi gave me this," he said. "There is an English girl in the caravan."

"An English girl with the Arabs! Impossible!" I cried, but the next words were arrested on my lips. The interpreter was holding out to me one of the crosses belonging to the Sisters of our Nursing Staff. It was the well-known Royal Red Cross, given by the Queen's command to any Nursing Sister who showed special devotion to her noble profession. Enamelled in crimson, and edged with gold, it lay now on the palm of the Mission boy's hand, the words: "Faith, Hope, and Charity," engraved upon it, the centre bearing the Queen's effigy.

"My God! what can this mean?" I muttered. "A nurse of our staff fallen into the hands of the Arabs! Surely there must be some mistake?"

"There is none," replied the interpreter, "the scout spoke the truth. Sir, it is one of the ladies from the Missionary Settlement. It is, doubtless, the young lady, whom they call Sister Liliias. I saw her once, before I joined the force at Watu; she was fair, with a white skin. The scout told me that a woman with a white skin had put this cross into his hands, and told him to give it to the first Englishman he met. He cannot speak a word of the English tongue, but she managed to convey her meaning to him. Now then, Major Dale, what is to be done?"

"We go to the rescue of that girl or we die," was my curt answer.

I returned to the side of the machila in which Vereker lay. I saw at a glance that his temperature was very high. His bright eyes met mine, he leant upon his elbow and uttered an exclamation.

"Dale," he said, "you have news! What is it?"

"Nothing of any consequence," I replied. "Can you not sleep?"

"Impossible! Look here, Dale, there is something up, you must tell me at once."

"Well, there is," I answered, after a brief pause; "and you may as well know it. Vereker, there is an English girl in the slave caravan. How she got into that hell on earth—why! what is the matter, old fellow?"

"Do you know what you are talking about?" he cried. "Do you know that you are telling me something which, *if it is true*—why Dale, old man, it means"—here he tried to rise to his feet, but the next moment fell back in a dead faint. Then, of course, I guessed the truth. It was a love story after all. He had met that English girl at Fort Macpherson and loved her. He thought she was murdered, and no wonder the mad terror of the thing had nearly killed him.

I desired the carriers to pull up, applied the usual restoratives, and he presently came to himself. When he did so, I saw that the first thing was to give him all the relief possible.

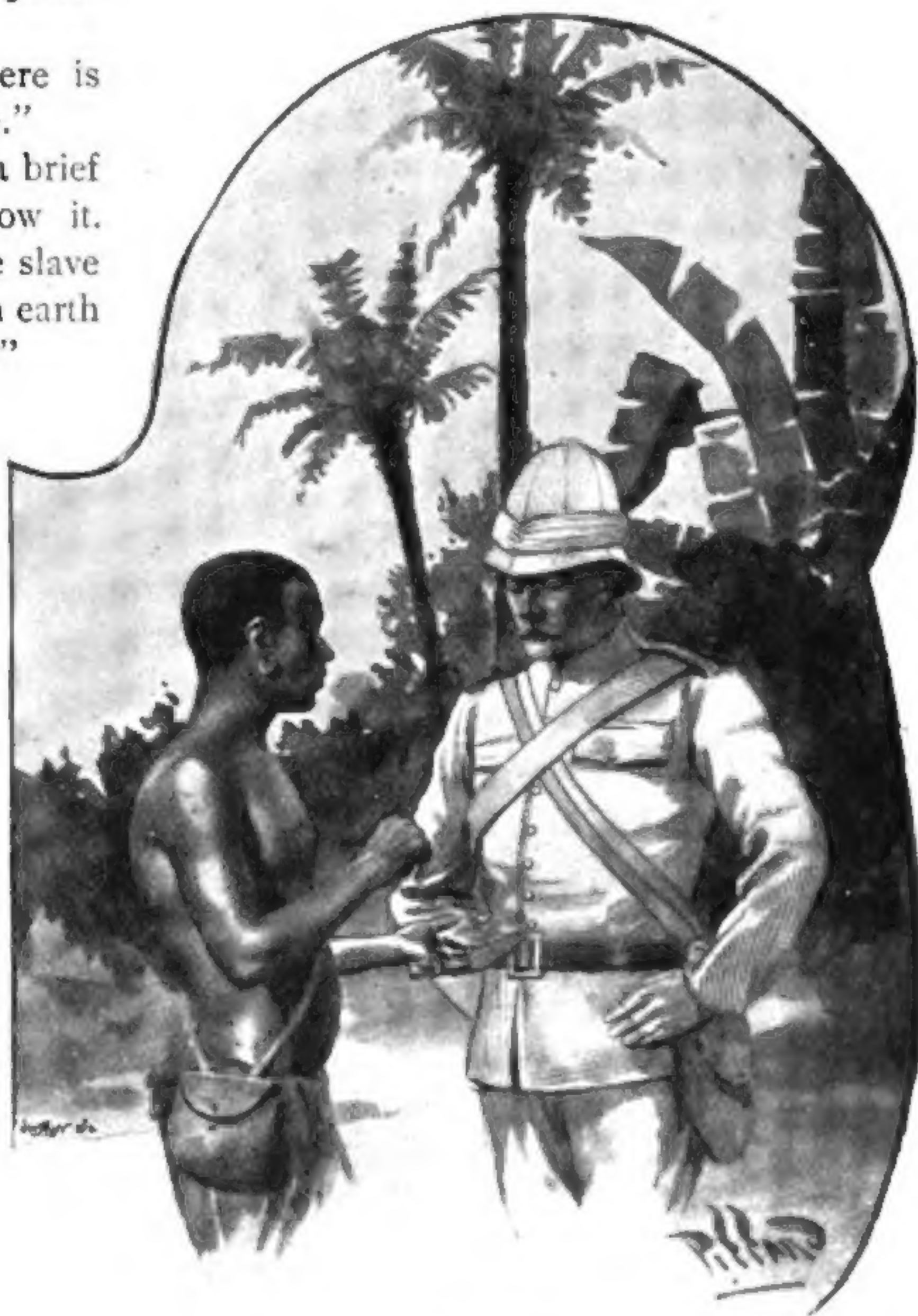
"The white girl amongst the

slaves," I said, speaking purposely in a cheerful voice, "is not only an English woman, but one of our own Army nurses. She gave this to one of the Awembi. He showed it to the Mission boy, who immediately recognised it. The girl had asked the Awembi to give it to the first Englishman he met. See, Vereker, see, it is the Royal Red Cross." I held it out as I spoke; he clutched it with a sudden, fierce grip.

"Thank God," he muttered. "Now I can live. Dale, I thought she was murdered. Oh, you can guess everything, can you not? I thought they had done for her. That was why I was so mad to head the expedition. I wanted to revenge her."

"Then you, you are engaged to her," I began.

"No, I have not spoken; I met her at Fort Macpherson. She is like no one else. I cannot talk of it. Dale, I can breathe now. I am better. We will push on; I believe to God we can save her."



One of the Awembi gave me this," he said.

He sat up in his machila, looking at me out of his feverstricken eyes with the most pathetic expression I had ever witnessed.

"I am much better, I shall be all right in no time," he repeated.

"The deuce you are!" was my reply. I laid my hand on his forehead; I could feel the pulses throbbing in each temple.

"You will be a dead man if you don't try to calm yourself," I said.

"No fear of that," he answered with a laugh, "I am scarcely likely to die now. Why, Dale, this Red Cross brings me news which would restore the dead to life."

"You had best tell me all you can," I said, "and relieve yourself. What is her name?"

"Lilias Pryne. She is Mrs. Wallace's sister; a young girl. She has not been long on the staff. I need not say more. Dale, since I heard the news of the raid a dumb devil got inside me; try as I would I could not talk of the thing. You see I had not spoken to her, and I did not feel that I had a right to appropriate her by showing any special grief. But all the same it was killing me. Night after night I have seen her murdered face. There was a fever in my brain long before it broke out. I can never tell you what I suffered. Then when I got the chance of this expedition it was like new wine in my veins. So we are on the track of the Arabs at last! Thank God for his mercies! To-morrow, Dale, I shall be as right as a trivet. I have got my work cut out. As right as a trivet to-morrow—to-mor—row." He spoke in a dreamy voice and began to wander slightly. The sudden spurt of strength had deserted him; he lay back again in the machila with a face the colour of chalk.

I shall never forget the remainder of that terrible march—the night soon fell on us impenetrably dark. The scouts said we must wait for dawn before proceeding further, and they also declared it unsafe to light fires, as our only chance of success was by keeping the enemy unaware of our approach. The air was damp and dreadful, the malarial night vapours rising around us. The land was like swamp. A worse place for a fever stricken patient it would be hard to find.

During the night Vereker kept muttering

low words in delirium, but, although I listened, I never once heard him breathe the name of the white girl. He was keeping up that strange self-control even through the delirium of his fever. He had no right to her, and he would not compromise her by speaking her name. Just towards dawn he fell into a quiet sleep, and his temperature went down with a sudden drop. I watched him anxiously, knowing that his prostration would be great. Presently I saw that he had opened his eyes, and was looking at me.

"Hullo, Dale!" he said, "I feel quite well."

"I hope you are better," I replied.

"Well or ill I have got my work to do to-day," he answered; "but I am much better. How far have we gone in the night? Are we close to Kitura?"

"I believe we are not a long way off," I answered, "but it was impossible to continue our march through the darkness. We shall soon, however, get under way."

He smiled in a wonderfully heart whole manner, and asked me to send his orderly to him. A few minutes afterwards we began to go forward with that silent step, that swift tread which characterises the native soldier. Not a sound did we make; the tramp of the men's naked feet upon the ground awakened no echoes. After a march of nearly two hours we made a halt on the wooded slopes of a hill overlooking the little village of Kitura, and immediately sent out a scout to reconnoitre. He returned quickly to say that the Arabs had no idea of the presence of our force, and were mostly in the huts. They seemed quite at their ease, apprehending no resistance of any sort, but the villagers were nervous, and in a state closely approaching panic.

When this news was brought to Vereker he thought for a moment, and then said that he had decided not to lead the attack until sunset; in the meantime, however, there was much to be done. The carriers and baggage must be placed at a safe distance and left under the charge of an orderly and two of the Sikhs. Vereker now rose and began to order the expedition; try as I would I could not oppose him. He sent a scout out soon again to reconnoitre, and keep us informed of

every movement of the enemy. During our hours of forced inaction the men were kept busy cutting strips of bark from the trees, which were to be utilised as ropes to bind the Arabs.

The day went slowly on, and my patient showed no sign of breakdown. As the evening approached he explained to me briefly his plan of campaign.

"Everything depends on taking the enemy by surprise," he said. "On one thing I am resolved—not a gun shall be fired."

"Why?" I asked in some surprise.

"For the simplest of reasons, because the noise would put the villagers into a panic. They would immediately either run away and raise the whole country against us, or do us equal mischief by siding with the Arabs. No, Dale, it must be a bloodless victory, or none at all."

"How can you manage that?" I asked.

"I have the whole thing mapped out in my brain. We shall do it, and well, too, if we can keep the Arabs completely in the dark as to our proximity."

As sunset approached all was in readiness, and Vereker gave his men further fighting directions.

"Remember, not a shot to be fired," he said; "the first man who raises his rifle is killed with the bayonet. I will take the huts to the left—Major Dale to the right. Hold! wait a moment!"—he crept forward, I followed him on tiptoe. My hand touched his, it burnt like a coal. Alas! the fever kept at bay by the intense excitement of the last few hours had returned with sundown.

"You are ill; this is madness," I could not forbear whispering.

"What does it matter, whether I live or die?" was the answer. "Look, Dale—thank God, it is as I hoped—we shall have them—we shall save her!"

I peeped over his shoulder. From where we stood, completely hidden ourselves in the thick jungle, we could see the Arab huts well; the men were lying about in the narrow verandahs, cleaning and polishing their guns, little guessing that any danger was near. Groups of slaves, all secured with *gori* sticks (cleft sticks which keep the head and neck in one position, but leave the arms

and legs free) were sitting listlessly on the ground, or standing about in mute dejection. I looked to right and left for the white girl, but she was nowhere visible. The sun was rapidly approaching the horizon, and at that moment an old man issued from one of the huts, and gave the signal for prayer.

Almost as one man each Arab rose on the instant, laid his gun on the verandah, and entered his hut in order to fetch his "praying mat." This was the supreme moment, for which Vereker had been waiting.

He turned and faced his men. The fire in his eyes, the ring in his low tones were felt all through the little force.

"Remember, boys, what I have already told you. No shots to be fired—a Sikh to secure the entrance to each hut, and hold it with bayonet and rifle. Others to take the guns. Each Arab to be bound hand and foot as he is captured. My lads, we are bound to succeed, or we ARE WIPED OUT TO A MAN!"

The next moment he was over the palisade and in the thick of it.

I shall never, as long as I live, forget the speed of the whole thing, and the way in which the men carried out Vereker's directions. There was not a falter, not a retrograde movement, all was done quietly, stealthily, without noise or confusion. Before the Arabs could leap through the huts, an armed Sikh stood in the door of each. The men were thus caught in a trap; their firearms being without, it was useless to attempt fight. In a few moments we had, as we fondly hoped, every ringleader secured. The Sikhs who were not in charge of the huts had already secured the firearms. Without a word, the Arabs submitted to their fate. They were bound, their hands behind them, their legs together, and finally secured in groups one to the other. Meanwhile, the Sikhs stood over them with loaded rifles; to make the least resistance was useless.

I was just on the point of binding my own man, when a horrified exclamation from one of our force caused me to raise my eyes. Just when I thought the danger was over, I perceived to my horror an Arab chief of great size and bulk approaching Vereker. He carried a heavy elephant gun. It was

already cocked and capped, and the man's hand approached the trigger. The next instant all would have been over, but with the leap of a cat the young soldier was on him.

The chief was very tall, a powerful man of great bulk, but Vereker had pluck and go, and all the training which an English school confers. Where was his fever? Where his weakness? With a hasty movement, the rapidity almost of *leger-de-main*, he wrenched the Arab's right hand away from the gun before he could fire it, and, holding it in this position, a desperate struggle took place.

The Arab fought with might and main, but he had to keep one hand on his gun. In his frantic efforts he almost lifted the Englishman off his feet; but, although blinded, and doubtless dizzy by the ferocity of the struggle, Vereker did not fail to keep the Arab's hand away from the trigger guard, and, notwithstanding all his efforts, the enemy could not fire.

I watched this scene with sensations which can never be described. Would the Englishman let go? The Arab must have felt that there was little doubt, but no, he held on with the pertinacity of a hundred furies. I had not enough rope left to leave my captive, and could not see a soul who would come to the brave fellow's aid. I raised my voice and shouted, but in the din no one heard me. A moment longer and Vereker must have been overcome by the superior brute force of his opponent, but just then there came unlooked-for assistance—assistance as startling as it was welcome.

An English girl, with a face white as death, and eyes sparkling with emotion, rushed from one of the huts, made straight for the spot where Vereker and the Arab wrestled in deadly conflict, slipped her hand with the quickness of lightning over the nipple of the gun, and removing the cap, let it fall to the ground. She then snatched up Vereker's rifle which lay almost at her feet, and pointed it at the Arab. No words passed her lips; her attitude, however, was all eloquent. The man saw that his game was up, he released his hold and bowed his head in token of submission.

"Here are the ropes; I'll help you to bind him," said the voice of Lilius Prynne. She knelt on the ground herself and assisted Vereker as he tied the ropes securely round the ringleader of the band.

Our victory was now complete. All the Arabs were secured. The villagers had fled in terror, the slaves crouched in abject fear, fully expecting that it would be their turn next to be killed, but I could attend to none of these things, for Vereker had fallen on the ground in a heap; the collapse which I had dreaded had come on with a vengeance. No breath came from the lips, which were slightly open. The muscles were relaxed, the face was of a grey hue.

"Your name is Lilius Prynne?" I asked of the white girl.

"Yes."

"You are one of the nurses of our Army?"

"I am."

"You have a Red Cross?"

"I had"—here her colour changed.

"Rest satisfied, it is safe. That Cross has been your salvation. Now, will you put your arm under Captain Vereker's head? We must get him round."

"Will he die?" she asked, with a break in her voice.

"With God's help, no. But he is as bad as he can be."

"He shall not die," she said, with a strange sort of assurance. "See, he is coming to himself."

So he was. He opened his eyes, and fixed them, not on me, but on the beautiful face of the girl who was bending over him. His eyes filled with an expression which I knew was not meant for me. I turned away.

"God be thanked!" he said; but immediately after relapsed into unconsciousness.

All was confusion and bustle, but Lilius Prynne never left our leader's side. I feared that he was dying, but he would surely die most happily with her arms round him, and knowing that he had saved her. It was imperative for me to take the command, and I had much to do. The slaves had to be liberated, the situation explained to them. The Arabs had to be bound afresh; we did this with bales of cotton, which we found in quantities in their huts. The cotton made stout

ropes. We put the hateful *gori* sticks on them, and told them that we meant to convey them down to Watu for punishment. Arabs will always take defeat quietly; no man knows better when he is beaten than an Arab. My immediate care, however, was for Vereker. Not a stone must be unturned to bring him back to life and health. In the course of the evening, with the aid of the carriers, we brought him to the place where our baggage awaited us. Here a hut was hastily erected, and he was placed in it.

That night Lilius Pryne told me her story in a few words.

"The memory of the awful raid is quite dim to me," she said. "The Arabs arrived soon after breakfast. I remember their rushing into the room where my sister and I were working, I remember her scared face, then I received an awful blow, and everything faded into nothingness. When I came to myself I was tied and bound, and was alone in a strange hut with an Arab woman bending over me. She held a cup to my lips, and managed to convey to me the fact that I was ill.

"I drank, and presently a man came in who understood a few words of English. He was the chief who nearly took Captain



She then snatched up Vereker's rifle, and pointed it at the Arab.

Vereker's life just now. He told me briefly that if I behaved myself and did not attempt to run away, they would treat me well. He threatened instant death if I attempted to escape, but said that they hoped to get a good ransom for me, and would not kill me nor injure me in any way if I would submit. I was too prostrate with illness at that moment to care much about anything. I wanted to sleep and to be alone. Of the next week or ten days I can give you no detailed account. I was dimly conscious that we were moving

from place to place; at last we arrived at Kitura. I was better then, and able to think. I knew that my one chance of release was to remain quiet and to appear to submit to the will of my captors. I was not bound nor fettered in any way; they knew only too well that I dared not escape. I was seldom alone, the women of the tribe keeping me company in my hut. Had I attempted to go into the jungle I should have been the victim either of wild beasts or hunger. I tried to pick up a few words of the Arab language and also that of the Awembi tribe.

"One day when I was alone an Awembi entered my hut—it flashed through my mind that here was a chance. I gave him the one thing of value in my possession, my Royal Red Cross, and succeeded in making him understand that he was to give it to the first white man he met, and to declare that I was

a prisoner with the Arabs. I had not the least idea that my desperate device would succeed. A few hours ago I was seated in my hut when I heard sounds of commotion, although there was little noise. I went to the door and looked out. There I saw Captain Vereker in a hand-to-hand conflict with Wambi, the Arab chief. I had no time to think, only to act. I rushed to his rescue, and you know the rest."

I did truly, and I was able to guess what brought the colour to the brave girl's cheeks, and the light to her eyes.

I have but few more words to add. Captain Vereker had a sharp bout, and for days Sister Lillas and I despaired of pulling him through, but in the end the fever succumbed to our watching and care. We were able to return slowly to Watu, and, as I said at the beginning of this story, the wedding-bells will ring to-morrow.

SPEAK, SWORDS, FOR ENGLAND.

At Agincourt the Frenchmen tried
To stem the storm of English pride;
Though doughty knights the foemen be,
The islanders refuse to flee:
The flying arrow checks the lance,
The ranks close up, the pikes advance—
And back they drive across Fair France
Her chivalry.

Speak, swords, for England
As oft ye spake before:
Come, write her name on scroll of fame,
As in the days of yore.

Whene'er upon the battled wave
She met the Spanish warships brave,
On swept the sails to bloody fight.
The cannon brattled day and night;
When toppling spars fell in the main,
With jury-mast they rigged again—
Until the foe beat up for Spain,
For Spain in flight.

Speak, swords, for England,
Who ne'er drew sword in vain:
Where'er the sea ran foaming free
It told of England's reign.

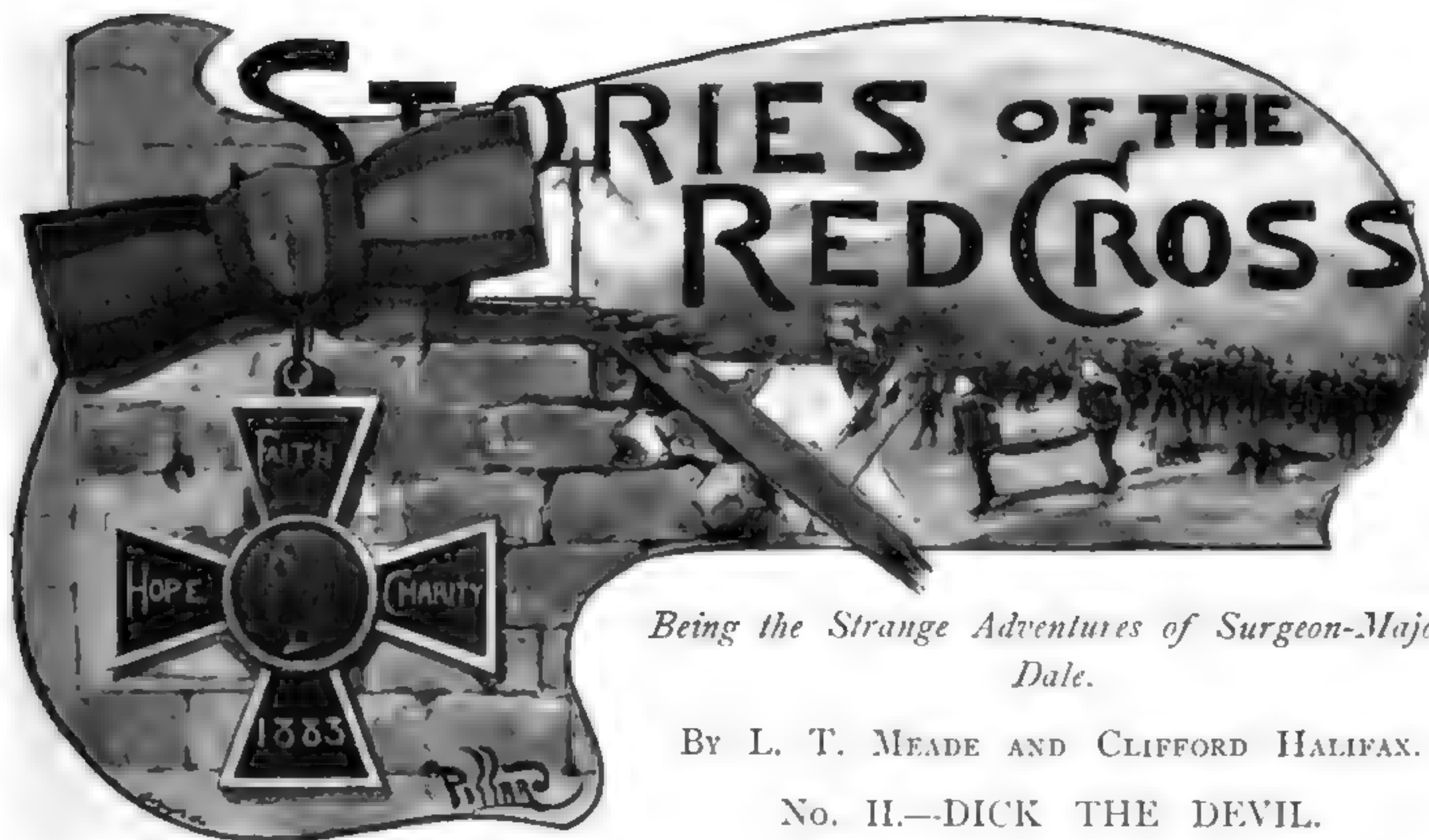
On sad Crimea's distant shore
Her starving soldiers staunchly bore
The dread disease which laid them low,
More fearful than the human foe;
But when the trumpets sang to horse,
Not Russian guile, nor Russian force
Could hold the squadrons' furious course—
When once let go.

Speak, swords, for England:
"Six Hundred" did ye say?
I mark the words, O ancient Swords,
Let England mark the day.

No paper now shows England's might;
Her sheathed steel no more shines bright;
Yet should her sons be called to war,
By her broad ensign flung afar,
Above such men its folds shall wave
As lie in the *Victoria's* grave,
Or sang in face of death "God save,
God save the Queen."

Speak, swords, for England:
The sword has carved her throne,
And long as blade be ever made,
Shall England hold her own.

F. NORREYS CONNELL.



Being the Strange Adventures of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

No. II.—DICK THE DEVIL.

WE had gone through a rough time, for we of the advance column had received an order to retire to the camp. We numbered in all about three hundred blacks, with a handful of white officers. The enemy were ten thousand strong. We were just in sight of the capital of Mogada in West Africa, which we were to take from the Lupés. The remainder of our force with the heavy guns and carriers was yet to come up the Tanger in the stern-wheelers.

When we started on our reconnoitring expedition we had no idea that the enemy were so numerous, and Major Thorpe, our commander, quickly perceived that it would be an absurd act of audacity to cope with them before the seven-pounders and other big guns had come to our aid. To retire, however, in the face of so bold and determined an enemy was a difficult operation. The slightest mistake or panic and our little column would have been lost, as every white man knew. We were surrounded on all sides and exposed to fire from the enemy's riflemen, but our black soldiers behaved splendidly, kept quite cool, and obeyed their officers' commands.

Our companies closed in to form square, and slowly but surely we made our way back to camp. The moment the retreat began a great shout went up from the Lupés, who started to rush up the ridge after us, and the

company under my special friend, Dick Brereton, had its work cut out for it in stopping the ugly rushes of our triumphant enemy; but we still kept our square in perfect formation, and gradually the Lupés cleared off to a more respectful distance. Thus we got into camp safely.

After the heavy fighting of the day I was just putting things a little ship-shape in my tent, when Brereton strode in. He seated himself on the nearest chair, and, laying his hand on my unsteady little camp table, pushed back his cap and looked me straight in the face.

"Well, Brereton," I said, "we have had a tough time of it, and had not the black soldiers behaved as well as they did, all would have been up with us."

He did not reply for a moment; then he said abruptly.

"Never mind the chances of war just now, Dale. I have come to say something about myself. The fact is this, I am in the devil of a mess."

I knew Dick's impetuous way, and said after a pause, as coolly as I could:

"What's up now?"

"This. Crosby, of No. 5 Maxims, has joined our column."

"You mean that tall, slender-looking man whom I saw you nod to as we were landing this morning?" I queried.

"The same," he replied.

"I don't remember ever seeing him before," I said. "Is he an old acquaintance of yours?"

He nodded.

"The facts of the case are these, Dale," he said, starting to his feet. "Crosby and I are in love with the same

girl. I have lost—and he has won. There's a position for you. Here are we comrades, shoulder to shoulder, our cause desperate, the enemy surrounding us, our lives not worth an hour's purchase, and yet I tell you, Dale, I feel fit to kill the fellow. What's to be done?"

For the moment I had nothing to say. This was not the first time I had heard from Brereton of a girl in England on account of whom he had volunteered for active service, because he could not stand the beastly life at home, as he expressed it. Now by an extraordinary coincidence the man to whom this girl was engaged had appeared upon the scene, and Brereton, who was badly hit already,

was completely bowled over. Surely in West Africa he might well have thought he would be free of his rival, but no.

It was about the queerest thing I had ever heard, and I felt that I did not like it a bit. Brereton was impulsive and hot-blooded. "Dick the Devil" his friends used to call him, and the name suited him well. Not that we did not love him, for he was as warm-hearted as he was chock full of passion—generous to a fault—ready to beggar himself for a friend, full of splendid stuff, but all the same a very demon when his feelings were excited the wrong way.

I had noticed a queer expression flitting across his face when he nodded to Crosby that morning, but in the excitement of our tough campaign had had no time to think of it. All that Brereton had told me up to the present of his unfortunate love affair was the simple fact that he was badly hit, and it was no go. I had never heard Crosby's name before. I was unaware that there was a fortunate rival.

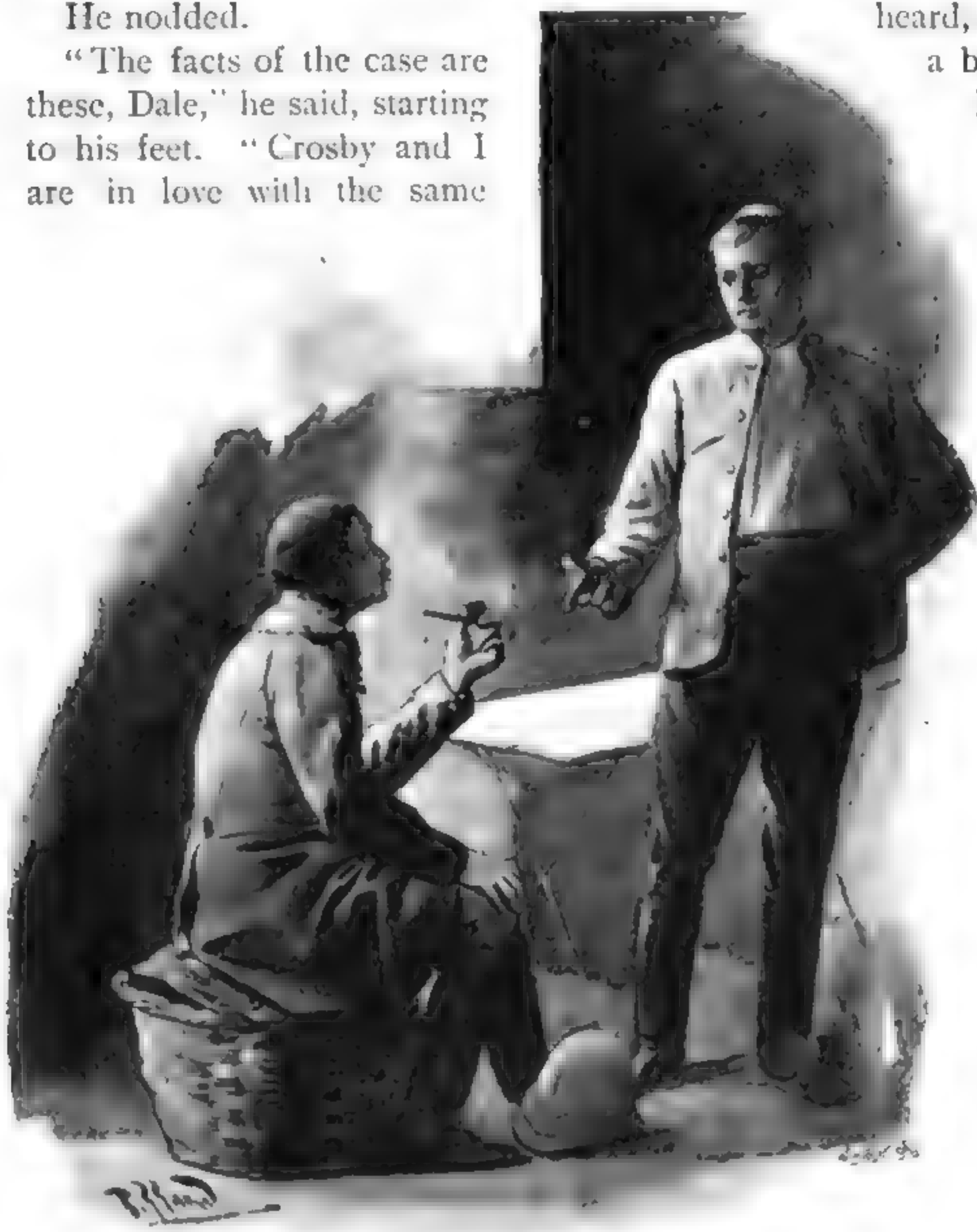
"What's to be done?" repeated Dick. "I cannot trust myself in that man's neighbourhood."

"Well," I said, speaking more stoutly than I felt, "you are not worth your salt if you cannot control your feelings—and, besides, is it necessary for you to see much of him?"

Dick gave me a queer smile, half pathetic, half despairing.

"Scarcely possible not to," he said, "when he and I are told off to occupy the same tent."

"H'm," I answered, "that is certainly a bit awkward. All the same, Brereton, I think I know you well. If ever a man had grit in him you have, and you can stand a good bit. There's not a pluckier lad amongst all the brave fellows here, and you know it."



"Crosby and I are in love with the same girl."

"I have a good mind to turn the whole thing up," he replied. He strode to the door of my little tent as he spoke.

"You don't mean what you're saying," I responded.

"True, true," he rejoined. "It was but a momentary impulse. It was the sight of that fellow with his confounded cool impudence. But look here, Dale, old man, you don't know the story. Shall I tell it to you? I can be as brief as you please."

"I am all attention," I replied. He looked me full in the face with his honest brown eyes, and began:

"Her name is Carey Carloss; we have known each other since we were children. You may have heard of the Carlosses—they have a rather big place, called Eaton Towers, in Warwickshire. Carey is only old Carloss's niece, and every scrap of the property is entailed to a distant heir. She has not a penny of her own, and the old man is powerless to leave her anything. All the same, he is as proud as Punch of her. When we were kids I used to call her my little wife, and it seemed to be more or less an understood thing that some day we should marry.

"Last summer we were having as jolly a time as could be at the Towers, when Crosby appeared on the scene. His regiment was quartered in Selford, not five miles away, and he came over almost every day. Soon he began to haunt the house, and everyone could see that he was spooney on the girl. Little wonder, for Carey had a bright eye and a way which captivated everyone. Not that she flirted exactly, but she was as gay as a sun-beam and could sing like anything.

"I tell you, Dale, when she sang those old English ballads you felt queer all over, and when she looked at you there was nothing you would not do for her. It was only to glance with half an eye at Crosby to see how things were. The fact is, we were both as deeply in love with that one girl as men could be. I was dying to speak but I did not dare, for I had nothing whatever to offer Carey, except half-a-dozen debts. I used to feel nearly mad when I watched Crosby looking at her and, I could almost see, making up his mind to win. It was a cheery situation, I can tell you, but all the same, it never occurred to

me that I should not come off best in the end.

" 'She loves me,' I used to say to myself, and I was as sure of that fact as anything under God's heaven. Still I could not speak—I felt fiendish bad about the whole thing, but honour held me back. I had done one or two things of which I was ashamed—things I would rather Carey never knew about. My old uncle, Sir Peter Brereton, had heard of some of my goings on, and had given me to understand pretty straight that he would cut me off with the proverbial shilling.

"Well, Dale, there was I and there was Crosby, well born, as straight as a die, and all the rest of it, and he followed Carey about like her shadow, and the little girl seemed to like him well, for all that she had a tender heart and a look in her eyes for me which I fondly believed she had for no one else. I was miserable, but not in despair, and at last a day came when I had a few hours of rapture, all too short, as you will soon see.

"It was a morning last November—we were following the hounds. Carey rode as if she had been born to the saddle. She was mounted on a thoroughbred mare, which old Carloss had bought for her. I have seen a good many women riding to hounds, but I never knew anyone who could touch her for the way in which she handled her horse. Crosby was with us, of course, and he kept as close to Carey as he well could. The mere look of him by her side made me swear under my breath, and with a slice of the devil which it is impossible to keep out on such occasions, I rode awkwardly for him, and took one or two of his jumps fairly under his nose.

"There was a nasty ditch and hurdles in front, and as I was riding ahead I was just making for it, when I saw him put spurs to his horse and come up to the same place. From the look on his face I could see that he meant a spill for one of us. We went at it neck and neck, and had a collision as we came over. I came out of the saddle, and got a nasty purler. I believe I was stunned for a moment, and then I had a feeling that it was all up with me—but the next instant I heard a woman's cry.

"That cry, low in itself, pierced through me like a sword. In a flash I was on my feet. I had managed not to let go of the reins, and vaulted back into the saddle. Crosby was already half across the field, and was looking back at me with the most sardonic smile you ever saw on anybody's face. Of course, the fall was as much my fault as his, but it did not make me love him any the more that he should have unseated me before Carey.

"As soon as I got back into the saddle I looked over my shoulder at Carey. The Squire had joined her, and had evidently pulled her up just at the other side of the ditch. The cry which had reached me when I was down was hers. I had only time now to get a glimpse of her face; it was like death, but her eyes were full of an expression which told me everything. The moment when she thought I was killed had drawn the truth into her face. She loved me—it was all right. For the rest of the day I seemed to tread on air. When I joined Crosby I said in a good-humoured voice:

"‘I came off second best at that spill.’

"‘You tried to break my neck,’ he retorted angrily, ‘and I wish to Heaven I had broken yours, as I nearly did.’

"I swallowed his words, for I guessed what prompted them—no doubt he had also heard Carey's cry. A few moments afterwards he left me to join her side, and they kept

together for the rest of the run. I did not mind, I kept remembering the look she had given me; it was enough to raise any man to the seventh heaven.

"Well, Dale, imagine the revulsion which was so close at hand—that night in the smoking-room Crosby told me that he had proposed to Carey in the hunting-field and she had accepted him. It was exactly as if someone had shot me plump through the heart. I felt mad like a wild beast. I hardly knew what I said, and blurted out:

"‘She may have accepted you, and she may

have to marry you—she has some good reason no doubt, but I am the man she loves.’

"‘Then get her to tell you so,’ he replied with a sneer.

"It was too late to see her that night, but I went to the Squire. I found him in his study, and walked straight up the room and faced him.

"‘Mr. Carloss,’ I said, ‘I have come to ask you if you will give me Carey.’

"‘Eh?’ he answered; he took his pipe out of his mouth and looked me full in the face.

"‘You are just too late,’ he said slowly. ‘Mr. Crosby honoured me by asking for my niece's hand not two hours ago.’

"‘The devil take him,’ I replied. I was mad with excitement and passion.

"‘I am the man she loves,’ I said. ‘We have loved each other for years, since we were children. Carey cares nothing whatever for Crosby.’



"I found him in his study."

" 'She has accepted him; is not that a proof?' said the Squire.

" 'If she has done so it is only because she is afraid of you,' I blurted out.

"The Squire grew very red when I said that, but he pulled himself in, and after a moment or so put me through a pretty strict catechism.

" 'What means have you to support a wife?' he asked.

"This was a facer, for I had nothing to tell him, nothing good I mean. I was simply a beggar with a record in the past none too white. My uncle, old Sir Peter, had threatened to cut me off with a shilling.

"The more I thundered and raved the cooler became old Carloss. When I had done speaking, he said a few words which were enough to put the extinguisher on me.

" 'By your own showing, you have no right to ask any girl to marry you,' he cried. 'Nothing under heaven would induce me to give you Carey. Crosby is in a very different position. He is not rich by any means, but he has no debts, and is a good steady fellow. I must ask you, Brereton, to take my refusal like a man, and not to persecute my niece.'

"I felt like a raving lunatic. I went straight to my room, and there and then packed my belongings, and left Eaton Towers within an hour. I wrote to Carey from Selford, asking her if she would be true to me and true to her own heart. I told her plump out that I had seen her love for me in her face that day. I sent off my letter, and she received it at an early hour the next morning. About ten o'clock I had her answer—a piteous little note which I keep still, and shall never part from. I know each word in it by heart. This is what she said:

"Yes, Dick, I love you, but I must marry the other man. I am a coward, and afraid. Forget and forgive, CAREY.

"There, Dale, was a poser for any fellow. She confessed that she loved me, and, God knows, I loved her, and yet I could do nothing for her. A week afterwards her engagement to Crosby was announced. After that I went to the dogs for a bit, but pulled up short. volunteered for active service, and here I am. I had been getting my feelings under control; I had been vowing, God knows how hard, to keep my manhood, and not allow a

girl to ruin me; but, now, it is all up—all up. What possessed that fiend to follow me, and get appointed to the same expedition? I shall either kill myself or him. I cannot stand it, Dale. There will be mischief before many hours are over."

"But you must stand it," I said. "There is no doubt you are in a tight corner, but other men have been placed as awkwardly before now. For goodness sake, Brereton, be a man, and keep yourself in hand."

He had covered his face with his big hands, and I could see that he was shaking all over. I went up to him and pushed him into the nearest chair.

"A good deal of your want of self-control is physical," I said. "You want food; you have gone through hours of marching and fighting. In a beastly climate like this it is necessary to do yourself well. I am just about to prepare some cocoatina, and have opened a tin of meat. What do you say to joining me?"

"I cannot eat," said Brereton; but then, making a visible effort, he pulled himself together, and, rising with the ghost of a smile, began to help me to prepare our frugal meal.

While we ate we talked of our chances with the enemy and the immediate outlook of the campaign, avoiding all subjects of more immediate interest.

When Brereton at last left my tent he looked much as usual, and I hoped that I had done him good service.

The unfortunate part of the matter was his having to occupy the same tent as Crosby, for I knew his impetuosity all too well. Meanwhile we had little time for personal feelings, for the enemy kept us pretty well employed. They now assembled on the top of a long, low undulation to our front. Away to the flanks bodies of cavalry were trotting about, rendered visible by reason of their white flowing garments. There was little doubt that they were determined to dispute every inch of the ground, and many times they approached close and threatened the safety of our camp.

Mogada was a great city, and we could see from the camp masses of lofty, thatched houses, and high mud walls forming inclo-

tures which intermingled with fine trees extending to the north as far as the eye could see. The place looked not unlike a great beehive, and all the inhabitants were in a state of the wildest excitement. They shouted and tom-tomed, and horsemen in hundreds rode about, swarming not only within but around the city. A big fight was imminent, but we could only keep on the defensive till the guns arrived.

On the morning of the 24th of January we heard to our dismay that one of the seven-pounders had to be abandoned, the escort being very severely attacked. We spent the greater part of the day keeping the Lupés off, and skirmishing in different directions. We waited, God knows how anxiously, for the guns and for the rest of our force to come up, as our ammunition was beginning to give out. At last, about 4 p.m., some of the seven-pounders arrived, and at once came into action, and soon afterwards, to our great relief, the big guns came up, preceded by the buglers who played them in. The remainder of our force, with Sir Henry Jervis, our general, at their head, quickly followed, and great cheering ensued. Amongst those who gave loudest vent to their feelings I noticed Brereton. To all appearance he had recovered his usual spirits; indeed, the moment was so full of excitement that he had little time to think of himself.

Late that same night, to my surprise, Crosby entered my tent. Hitherto I had never said a word to him, and once or twice I had fancied that he wanted to avoid me. His ostensible reason now for paying me a visit was to ask me to bind up a small gunshot wound which he had received that day, and which had grazed his wrist badly.

While I was attending to it, I took the opportunity of observing him carefully. He was a different calibre of man altogether from Brereton, and at a close view I did not wonder at my friend's impetuous feelings with regard to him. Not only had he won the girl whom Brereton loved, but he was himself that cool sort of sardonic chap with whom it is most difficult to deal. I had already had proof, however, of his bravery as a soldier, for I had noticed him more than once that day in the thickest of the fight.

"Thank goodness for one thing," he said, when I had finished bandaging his arm; "now that the remainder of our force has come up we shall have done with this everlasting skirmishing; our fun begins in hot earnest to-morrow."

"Just before daybreak," I answered, nodding to him.

"Yes—Sir Henry means to surprise the left flank of the enemy. We shall be in Mogada by to-morrow night."

"I hope so," I replied; "but our force is a mere handful compared to that to which we are opposed."

"Never mind," he answered with a flash of enthusiasm, "an Englishman against the world—now that the big guns have arrived we shall do."

He paused for a moment looking at me attentively. His face was thin and somewhat sallow. I noticed for the first time that he had good eyes, well set, and that they looked at you straight. You felt that whatever his faults you could trust him.

"You are going to the front with us to-morrow, are you not, doctor?" he asked.

"Why, yes, of course," I answered in some surprise.

"If I fall and you escape will you do something for me?"

"What do you want?" I asked, with an uncomfortable premonition of what was to follow.

"I am engaged to a girl at home—I have written her a letter which"—he pulled a packet out of his breast pocket—"in case I die I should like her to receive. Will you take care of it for me and see that it goes to her? If all is right to-morrow you can let me have it back again."

He offered me the packet as he spoke. I put my hands behind me.

"Forgive me," I answered, "but I ought to tell you that I know your story—and Brereton is my greatest friend. I can do what you wish if in the face of this you still desire it."

A look of astonishment filled his eyes and the colour of surprise flooded his sallow face. Then a black frown came between his brows—he seemed to recede into his shell as though he would never come out again.

"Thanks, I quite understand," he said coldly. "Of course, I can easily give this little commission to someone else."

He bade me a curt good-night and left the tent.

I felt strangely uncomfortable. On nearer acquaintance there was something to respect about Crosby. He was not lovable like Dick Brereton, but he was a true man at heart. He had won Carey Carloss, as it were, in open fight. I longed more than ever that the two

opened the door and entered. The two firebrands, as I could not but term them, had already met—already a quarrel had occurred—their coats were off, they were fighting like a pair of schoolboys. I shouted to them but they did not hear. Brereton's face was crimson, and the great cords stood out in his throat. Crosby was a slighter and less heavily built man. I shouted again, but neither of them took the least notice. For the time they were like wild beasts, indifferent to me



They were fighting like a pair of schoolboys.

men should be friends, I felt more than ever anxious about them. Crosby had looked really nasty as he walked away. If he were to meet Brereton in this mood and—good God! how was it possible not to meet him? Were not the two men occupying the same tent?

"I'll just go over and ask Brereton to come for a stroll round the camp," I said to myself.

When I approached the tent I heard sounds within. Without a moment's hesitation I

and to the rest of the world. I suddenly made up my mind not to interfere.

"After all they are not using firearms, and will be better friends after they have made it up," I said to myself. "Let the better man win—it will cure a lot of bad blood."

I stood aside therefore to watch the game. It had always been a weakness of mine to love a good square English fight with fists, and these two were well matched, though Brereton was the bigger and more muscular

man. Still Crosby was the sort to hold his own, well built, active as a cat, putting a blow in when he saw his chance, and avoiding the sledge-hammer drives which Brereton in his anger was making at him.

After a time it occurred to me that whichever man lost in this somewhat equal fight, he would prefer his defeat not being witnessed, and I softly stole out of the tent. I resolved to keep my station at a little distance. After a time the sound of blows ceased, and the voices of the two men rose in angry conversation. A moment or two afterwards the tent door was opened and Brereton came out. Dark as was the night, he saw me at once by the light of a passing lantern, and came straight to my side.

"Was I mistaken, or did you come into our tent just now?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied, "I came into the tent and shouted to you and Crosby, but you were too busily engaged to hear me."

"I licked him, that's a comfort," said Brereton. He gave a short sigh of satisfaction.

"Then that's all right, old man," I answered; "you feel better, don't you?"

"Can't say I do. There's a devil in me, and it gets stronger day by day."

"You have no right to talk like that."

"How can I help it," he retorted. "It is easy for you, Dale. You don't know her. There was no one else for me in all the world but just that one girl. Since I was a boy I could think of no one else—and remember she loves me, she has said so, and I saw it in her face; she only marries Crosby under compulsion. I tell you I feel ugly, and I cannot trust myself."

"What did he say when you licked him?" I asked after a pause.

"Oh, he behaved straight enough. He offered to give me satisfaction when the campaign was over. He muttered something about seeing the thing out with swords—but of course, that is not to be thought of while we are in the Queen's service."

"It is never to be thought of," I said, "put it out of your head, Brereton. I am glad you confided in me, and now I have something to say on my own account. You have no pity for Crosby, but I have. I believe at bottom he is a right good fellow,

and he is sincerely attached to Miss Carlloss."

I then told him of the incident of the letter.

"Of course I could not act for him," I said, "but I saw in his face that he is as much in love with that girl as you are yourself."

"Don't speak of it, Dale. I cannot trust myself to argue on the point. She loves me. I hug that thought to my heart; it keeps me from going off my head."

Soon afterwards we both returned to our tents, and at an early hour on the following morning the fun in truth began.

I kept with the advance guard to which both Brereton and Crosby belonged. We soon reached the ridge above Mogada, and found a big army waiting for us. They came up in great excitement, swarming round the city. Their bravery was ignorance, as, when many were hit at any one point, they ran. We shelled and Maximed them on all sides with fearful effect. There were hundreds of horsemen, and a good many guns and rifles were fired at us. A few of our men were hit, but not many.

We burnt the outside villages with our Maxims, and at last entered the outskirts of the town which were deserted. After some hard fighting on my own account, I had got somewhat into the rear to look after a wounded soldier, when I felt a touch on my arm. I glanced round, and Brereton, who had been running hard, came up to me. His eyes were blazing with excitement, but his face was deadly pale. I was giddy myself from the heat of the sun, which was intense, and almost staggered when he touched me.

"What is it, Brereton? What has happened? But stay one moment, just hold this poor fellow's head. Ah, I thought as much; he has just breathed his last."

I closed the eyes of the dead man and stood up.

"Now then I can listen to you," I answered.

"I have done it!" he said. "I knew that devil would get the better of me."

"What do you mean? Speak."

"I believe he is dead. There were two niggers standing over him. I could have

saved him but I looked the other way—it is all over. I have done it, I always knew I should. I wish to God you would run your sword through me, Dale, I am unfit to live.”

“Nonsense! you are excited and do not know what you are saying.”

“Oh, I know it well enough. I always felt I should do it. It was in me and was bound to come out.”

“But are you sure he is dead?” I asked.

“He may be only wounded.”

The poor fellow became hoarse in his excitement.

“I tell you, Dale, I saw him. He was down and two of the brutes over him. They were about to spear him—I saw his white face. I would have gone for them, but that devil within clutched at me and I turned away.”

“Then let us find him,” I

said briefly; “show me the place where he fell.”

Brereton looked at me for a second, then hope seemed to leap back into his eyes.

Without uttering a word he rushed from my side, beckoning to me to follow him. We were on the outskirts of the fray, and soon found ourselves in the direction of a swamp about two hundred and fifty yards to the left of the city walls. Brereton was the younger and swifter man—he rushed madly over the battle-field, and once I nearly lost sight of him. Then the next moment I saw him bounding back to me.

“Hurry up, doctor,” he cried, “I have found him, and he is alive: only just alive, mind you—bad thigh wound—bleeding to death. Hurry, in God’s name—quick, we may save him yet.”

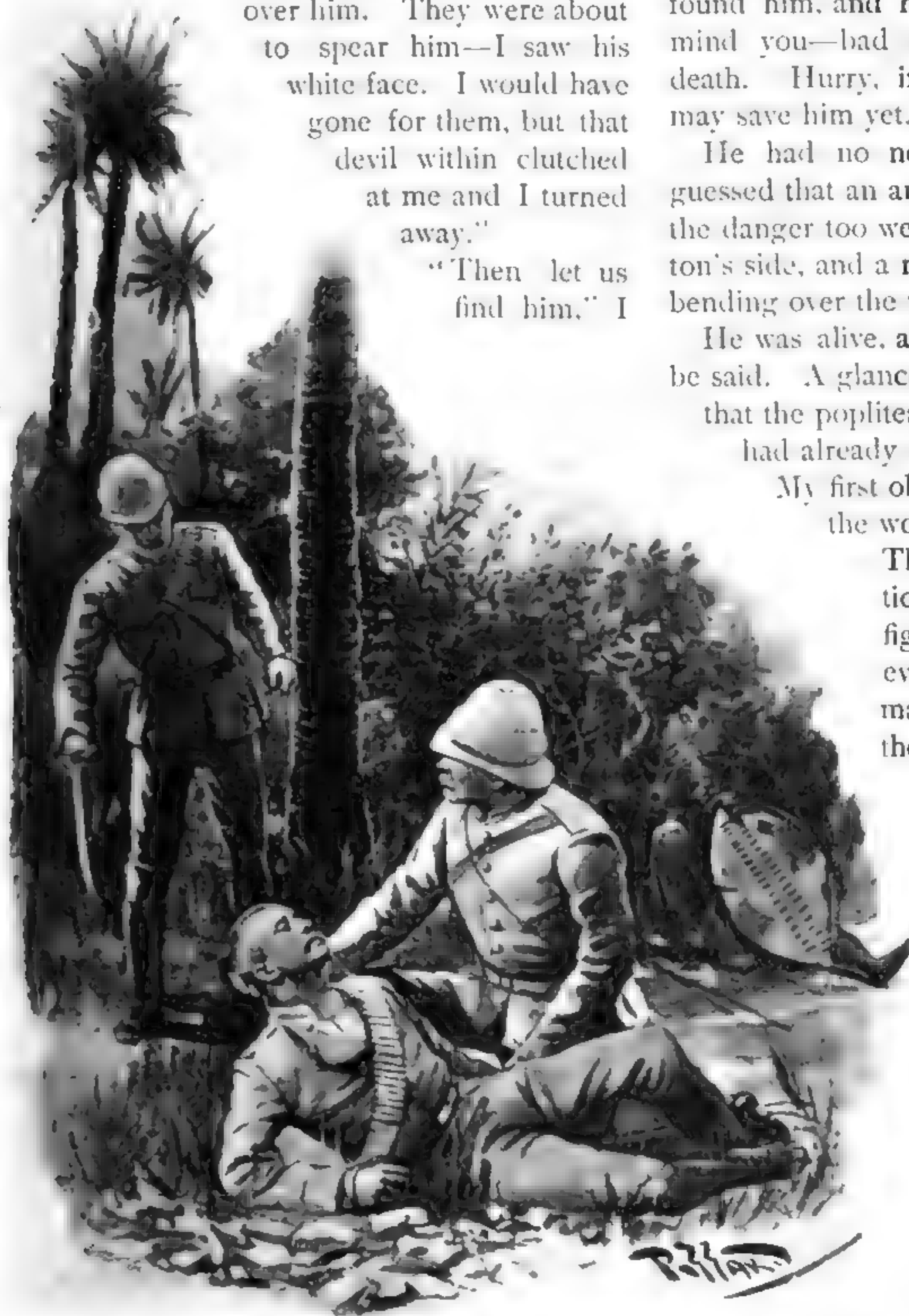
He had no need to bid me hurry. I guessed that an artery was severed, and knew the danger too well. I soon reached Brereton’s side, and a moment later we were both bending over the wounded man.

He was alive, and that was all that could be said. A glance was sufficient to show me that the popliteal artery was severed. He had already fainted from loss of blood.

My first object was to hastily bind up the wound and form a tourniquet.

There had been a brief cessation of hostilities, but now the fight raged more fiercely than ever—it was impossible to make our voices heard above the din of battle.

I had just managed, with Brereton’s aid, to lift Crosby on to a litter, and was directing the carriers to take the wounded man behind the shelter of a wall (where we were then was quite in the open), when a body of the enemy caught sight of us. They raised a shout, and were on us with a rush. I had had no time to apply the tourniquet properly, and was about to re-adjust it when the carriers



“What is it, Brereton? What has happened?”

dropped the litter and fled. The sudden jerk caused the wound to bleed afresh. Amid a volley of firing I had now to perform my surgeon's duties. I readjusted the tourniquet, taking it out and applying it properly.

Meanwhile Brereton was fighting as truly man seldom fought before. None of our friends were in sight, and I made sure our last hour had come. But even at such tremendous odds the brave fellow managed to keep the enemy at bay. Again and again they bore down on him, and again, and yet again he drove them back. The audacity—the aim—the accuracy of that magnificent defence I have never seen equalled. It was as if the lad had through the fire of hell were winning back his lost soul. The dead lay around him—he seemed to bear a charmed life.

But I knew it could not last. Crosby was lying like one dead, and at that moment I felt I could do no more for him. Against such odds Brereton's courage must give way, and I was just about to rise from my knees to come to his assistance when a shout, welcome as the voice of heaven, broke on our ears. The next moment Major Thorpe, with a body of cavalry, dashed up.

"Bravo Brereton, bravo Dale," he cried. "It won't be my fault if you are not both recommended for the V.C."

The moment the cavalry appeared the enemy fled, and Brereton dropped his revolver.

"Help me, Thorpe, to get this poor fellow back to camp without delay," I said.

There was a glow on Dick's face, but he did not utter a word.

In their tent later that evening I looked Dick Brereton full in the eyes.

"My boy, you have made atonement," I whispered to him.

"Will he live?" he asked, nodding at the wounded man.

"With God's help—yes," I answered.

"Look here, Dale, I mean to go through with the thing now to the bitter end; I want to nurse him to-night."

"No, no, Brereton," I answered; "remember the fighting is not over. You and the rest of the force have got to take Mogada

to-morrow. You are dead beat; lie down, and have a rest."

"I never felt more fit," he replied. "I will sit up with him, Dale; you lie down. I will call you, if necessary. Now, see here, old man, I mean to do it—there is no manner of use in arguing the matter."

I saw his mind was made up, and thought I should please him best by humouring him. Accordingly, having given a few directions, I lay down, but not to sleep. Brereton sat with his big shoulders hitched up to his ears, his figure making a huge shadow on the wall. Crosby lay at full length on his narrow camp bed breathing faintly. Presently I heard a rustle and a movement, and then Brereton's words.

He was telling Crosby of that black moment when he had deserted his brother soldier on the field.

"The devil came over me," he said. "For the moment I was mad—the temptation was too cursed strong. It got the better of me. I thought if you were dead and out of the way, I might get her yet. When that thought flashed over me it was as if not one but a thousand devils made havoc of me. You had no chance. I saw you and your white face, but I pretended not to see. I turned aside; I let you die."

"And—afterwards——?" said Crosby's voice, sounding faint and far off.

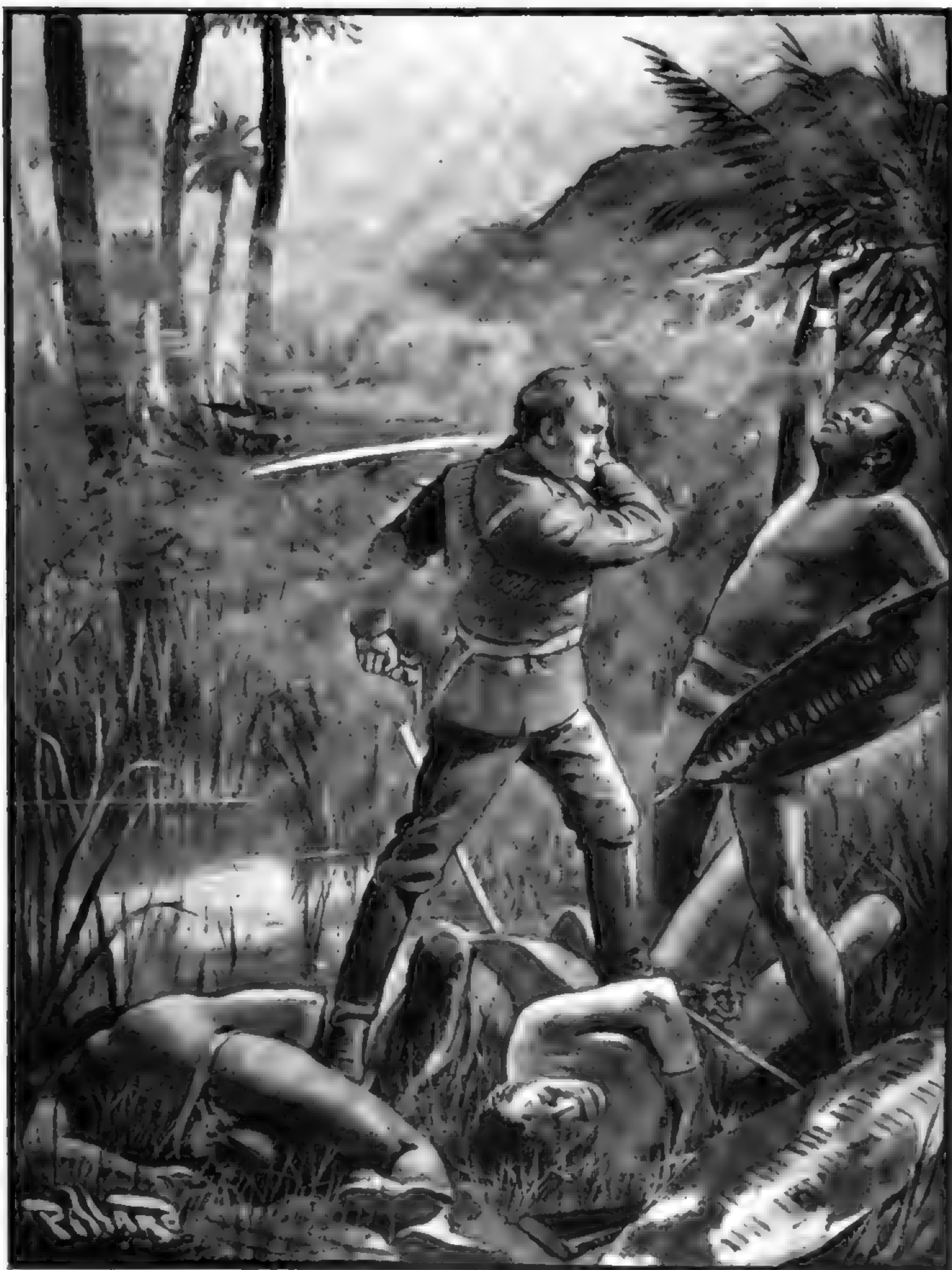
"Oh, afterwards—why, then—it was as if another chance was given me. Perhaps you cannot understand, but I think I can explain. After I let you die, it was as if I had gone straight into hell—the hope of saving you was like getting back heaven. I fought like any fury. Nothing mattered if I could but save you—it was all right afterwards."

Brereton's head dropped on his hands.

"I believe that devil is dead," he said, after a long pause. "Crosby, old man, can you forgive me?"

"With a heart and a half, old fellow, and—I say, Brereton,"—the words came out slowly, and with pain—"if we two get home again, she, Carey—shall have it put to her straight—she shall choose between us—she shall have the one—she loves best."

Dick raised his head, and flashed a look at Crosby. Then I saw him put out his big,



He seemed to bear a charmed life.

muscular hand, and I knew the fingers closed over those of the wounded man.

Early in the morning, just before he went off to join his company, Brereton came to me with a great glow of happiness on his face.

"I say, Dale," he exclaimed, "I have



Crosby lay at full length upon his narrow camp bed.

made it up with Crosby. You were right about him—he is no end of a brick—he is worthy even of *her*. I am about the happiest fellow on earth. I don't know myself—I feel all on fire, and as if I could do anything—but see here, Dale—I believe we have just time—will you do something for me?"

"To be sure, Brereton. What?"

"I have a sort of premonition—of course, there may be nothing in it, but you know Crosby was shot twice, and it may—I say it may be my turn to-day. I mean I may not be bullet-proof. Pull out a sheet of paper—be quick—I want to make my will."

"To make your will now!" I cried. "What in the name of fortune!"

"Oh, get the paper, Dale, and be quick! I shall feel more comfortable. See, I will dictate to you."

He was in no mood to be argued with, and, right or wrong, I must yield to him. I stretched out my hand, pulled my much battered writing-case towards me, took out a sheet of paper, and, dipping the pen in ink, looked at Brereton. He looked down at me, and began to speak.

"I don't know how it is done," he said, but you can put it something in this way:

"I leave to Carey Carloss my sword, my uniform, my watch, and the old Bible which belonged to my mother." He pulled up short.

"That's my orderly's step," he cried. "I must be off."

He buckled on the sword which he had just bequeathed to Carey Carloss.

"See here," I cried, "as you have begun, you may as well finish. Anything else to leave Miss Carloss? Brereton, you must not go before you have signed this. Anything else to say, or to leave to her?"

"I have not much," he muttered, "and yet I know there are a few things, only I can't remember them. Better put it this way:

"And all that I possess at the time of my death."

I hastily scribbled in the words.

"Don't keep me—I must be off," he said impatiently.

"Yes, yes, I have written it," I said. "Now, your signature."

He took the pen, dropped on his knees, and wrote his name in full. I added mine underneath.

"It is all dreadfully informal, but it doesn't matter," I said, "for you'll live to make a dozen of these." My voice was full of cheer.

He nodded to me, and dashed through the

tent door. I folded up Dick Brereton's will and put it away.

That day my duty kept me by Crosby's side. He was suffering from great shock, and as I had to cut down and tie the artery, I was more than fearful lest gangrene should supervene.

The battle raged and thundered. I could scarcely hear my own voice. Towards evening, after a long sleep, the wounded man looked up at me.

"Stoop down, Dale," he said, "I want to tell you something."

I bent over him.

"I am going to give Carey—to Brereton—for she loves him. I always saw it, though I tried to shut my eyes. He shall have her, but it will be—a tough job."

I thought so, as I watched the colour ebb away from his face, too white already.

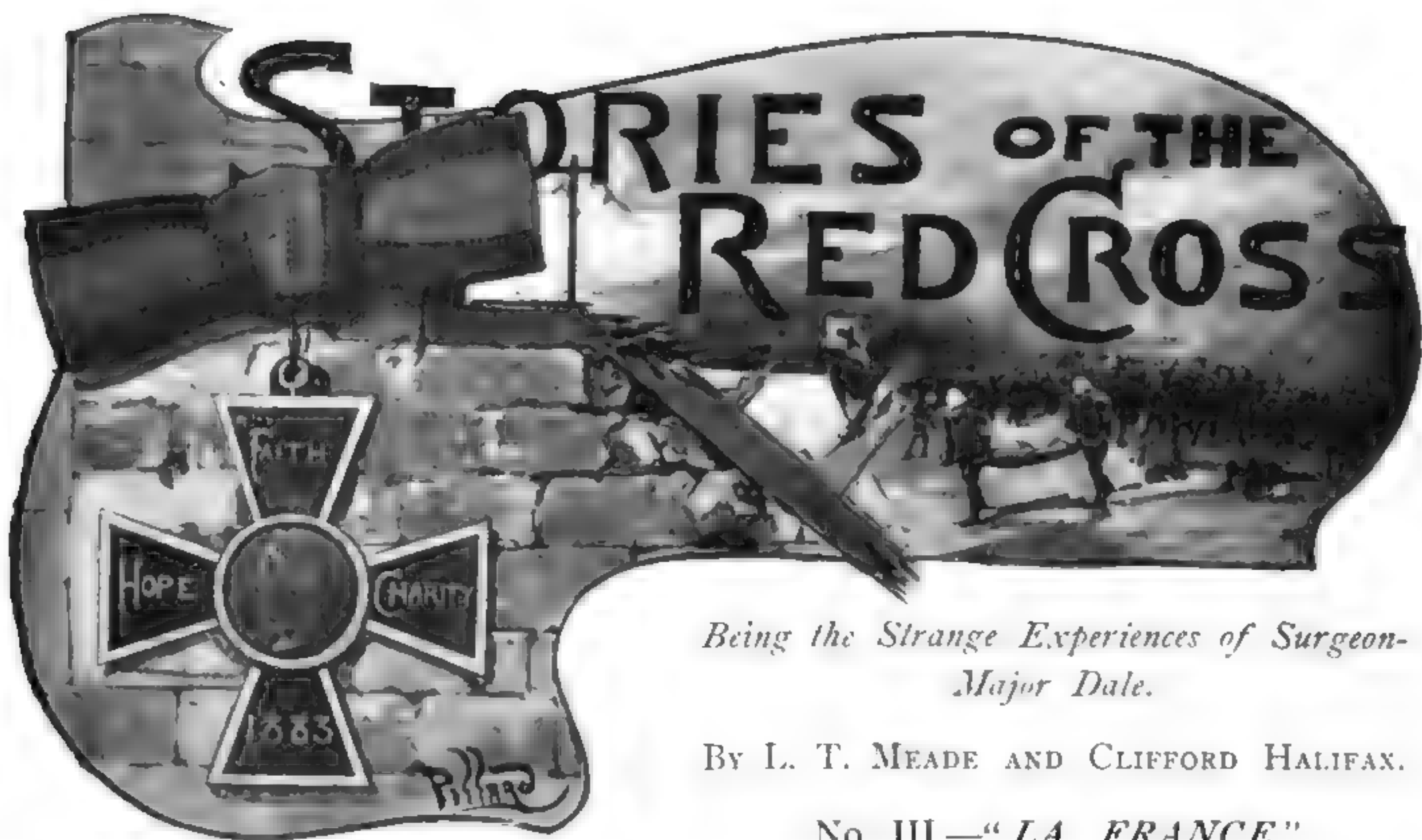
We had a grand victory that day, and took Mogada and routed the enemy, but in the evening they brought Dick Brereton back to camp with a gun-shot wound straight through his heart, and a smile on his lips.

After all Crosby was not called upon to make his sacrifice.

Dick's will held good, and meant something more than mere sentiment, for old Sir Peter had died a month before Dick himself, and getting tidings of the lad's pluck and bravery, had changed his mind and left him all he possessed. Thus Carey became a rich woman, but she told me when I saw her last, just on the eve of her wedding, that the possession she values most in the wide world is Dick Brereton's sword.



They brought Dick Brereton back to camp.



Being the Strange Experiences of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

No. III.—“*LA FRANCE*.”

JEYREPORE is well known to be the gayest station in the hills, and during one eventful season Mrs. Greville was the prettiest woman there. She was partly of French extraction, and as her Christian name happened to be Rose, the wits of the place dubbed her “La France.” The name suited her to perfection, for she had all the grace of that matchless rose of all roses, with the freshness, the delicacy, the finished perfection which also characterise it. She had come among us as a bride, and we one and all gave her a hearty welcome. Her husband was my old friend, Greville, of the — Dragoons. He had always been a popular fellow, and when, on the morning after his arrival, he rode round the place accompanied by his beautiful young wife, there was not a man anywhere about who did not wish him good luck, health, and prosperity.

Very soon Mrs. Greville was in the thick of the fun—attentions were lavished upon her from every quarter, and when it was further discovered that she was not only a belle but a very witty and bright young woman, the *furore* which she excited knew no bounds.

During that brief and brilliant season she never entered a ballroom without every eye being turned in her direction. The other women in the place had not a chance beside her, and Greville, who used to be an invete-

rate dancer, and a prime favourite, was in danger of losing his reputation, for he was so much in love with “La France” that when he was not dancing with her himself, he was content to stand by the wall for the sole purpose of watching her.

At such times I began, from a queer habit of my own, to watch him, and at the fifth or sixth ball given in honour of the bride, I could not help noticing an anxious shadow over his face. I wondered at this, for nothing could be more perfect than the way in which Mrs. Greville conducted herself. It was easy to see, even by one glance at her sparkling dark eyes, that her heart was all her husband's. Nevertheless, I, who knew him well, saw that for some reason Greville was uneasy. As long as he kept this feeling to himself, only showing it to the keen eyes of his very old friend, it did not matter, but soon he began to exhibit his feelings in a more marked fashion; there was an habitual frown between his brows, his manner was at once restless and *distract*. I heard it remarked upon, and conjectures were rife as to the cause.

When this had gone on for two or three weeks it occurred to me that I would stand it no longer—I would call to see him and try if I could not get at the reason of his somewhat extraordinary behaviour.

On the night when I arrived at his house

the bride herself came to the door to welcome me. As I looked at her I could not but admit that I had seldom seen a more fascinating young creature. She was in white, which gave her an ethereal appearance—there was a tender rose-bloom on her cheeks, and her great, dark eyes, so large as to be almost remarkable, looked straight at me with a sort of appeal. From the first I had noticed something pathetic about this girl. In repose her face was always sad.

"How kind of you to come to see us, Dr. Dale," she said, holding out her hand to me. "Ronald is in the smoking-room; I'll tell him that you are here."

She ushered me into her tiny drawing-room and ran off to inform her husband. He came in the next moment with a hearty smile of welcome on his honest face.

"Hullo! Dale, I am glad to see you," he cried. "Take a chair, won't you. You have not yet heard Rose sing; you shall do so by-and-bye."

I sat down on the nearest ottoman, and we began to talk on many matters—soon our conversation drifted to the subject of the Khotral campaign, which was just then exciting the attention of all the Queen's officers on the north-west frontier of India.

"I have a good mind to apply for a billet under Colonel Kane," said Greville suddenly.

His wife had seated herself on the back of his chair. I noticed now that her slender girlish hand trembled, then dropped into her lap.

"Only, if you wish it, darling," added the young man, hastily glancing back at the lovely face of "La France." "There, dear, I'm sorry I mentioned it. Sing something, Rose; I want Dale to hear your voice."

"What shall it be?" she asked, as she went to the open piano.

"My favourite."

"But that is a man's song to a woman?"

"Never mind, forget that part, sing it to us; nothing suits you so well."

She sat down to the instrument and her voice filled the little room. I shall never forget how it sounded, nor the old-fashioned words:

"My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
My love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune."

The low, somewhat deep voice, the refrain with its beauty, gave me a lump in my throat and made me think of the old folk at home and wish myself back with them.

Mrs. Greville had scarcely finished the ballad before she sprang to her feet.

"Don't ask me to sing any more to-night," she said, looking appealingly at her husband.



"How kind of you to come and see us, Dr. Dale," she said.

"I am tired; if Dr. Dale will excuse me, I will go straight to bed."

Instead of replying her husband gave her a peculiar look.

"It is all right," she said, answering it. He smiled then, but in a ghastly manner. She shook hands with me and left the room. The moment we were alone I spoke eagerly.

"Well, you are a lucky fellow," I cried. "Where in the name of fortune did you find her? There is not a woman like her in Jeyrepore. She has taken us all by storm."

"You don't say a word too much for her," he answered; but as he spoke that peculiar frown, accompanied by an agonised droop of the lips, flitted across his face. I saw it and took my opportunity.

"Notwithstanding your luck you don't look too fit," I said. "Is there anything the matter, Greville?"

"There is," he said abruptly. "Something bothers me, and more than a little. I shall confide in you some day, but not to-night. Have a cigar—I can recommend this brand."

He held out a box to me as he spoke. I took one, lighted it slowly and began to smoke.

What could be wrong? Without doubt Greville was suffering misery and of an acute form. Where was the skeleton at the feast? Surely no people ought to be happier than this young couple.

"You didn't mean what you said just now about volunteering to join the Khotral Relief Force?" I said.

"Yes, I did," he replied; "that is I did and I didn't—it may come to it, and soon. Not that I would oppose her, Dale, but she, too, might see that it is the best—the only thing to be done."

"At the present moment she does not see it," I answered; "even the distant thought of such a parting agitates her to a remarkable extent."

"I know it," he said, rising; "but see here, old fellow, let us talk of something else just now. I have rather a fit of the blues, and cannot tackle the thing to-night."

We went into his smoking-room, chatted for a time on indifferent matters, and then I left him.

It was a week later when he called at my quarters.

"Will you come and have a look at the wife, Dale? She is ill," he said.

Now if there was anybody in the world who seemed to embody the perfection of physical health, it was the graceful young woman who had taken Jeyrepore by storm.

"What is wrong?" I asked, looking into his anxious face.

"I will tell you when we get to the house."

When we reached the pretty little bungalow I asked at once for Mrs. Greville.

"She is in bed," he said. "You must pull her round as quickly as you can."

"But what ails her?"

"I am just going to tell you. Come into my smoking-room."

We entered the little den. The moment we did so Greville locked the door, and, going straight to a small cabinet which hung against the wall, unfastened it and produced a bottle of brandy. From this he poured a stiff dose into a glass and swallowed it at a gulp.

"Good gracious man! what did you do that for?" I asked.

"Because I have something ugly to say, and I want strength," was the reply. "Now, Dale, be prepared for a facer. You doctors are safe, and this will go no further. You have your suspicions, and I am going to confirm them. Rose drinks. She drinks like a fish. Her mother drank before her. Her eldest sister is in a lunatic asylum owing to the effects of drink. There! the cat is out of the bag. Don't imagine that I married her in the dark; she kept nothing to herself, and she is not to blame. It is all this cursed heredity—she inherits drink."

"You knew it beforehand, and you married her?" I said at last.

"I knew it beforehand, and I married her. She did not want me to, but I over-persuaded her. For the first couple of months all went well—then the awful craving, which she used to say my presence was sufficient to kill, came over her with renewed force. It has been on her ever since we came to Jeyrepore, and she has been going from bad to worse. At times she is like one possessed of a devil; the thing conquers her now daily. Do you remember that night when you came here a week back



She started upright and pointed with her hand.

—she had taken a vow on her knees that afternoon that she would not touch another drop for at least twenty-four hours, but when I went to her bedroom after you left she was as drunk as if she were a fishwife. Now she has every symptom of an attack of delirium tremens. I don't want the whole place to ring with this, and yet it is sure to get out. You must give her relief. As to curing her, that is past hope; but come and see her."

He turned to leave the room as he spoke, and I followed him. He ushered me into the little bedroom. Mrs. Greville was sitting up in bed—there was a strained, horrified expression on her face. When she saw a fresh face, however, as is invariably the case with the victims of delirium tremens, she pulled herself together, and endeavoured to exercise a measure of self-control.

"How do you do, Dr. Dale?" she said, holding out her hand. "I am not quite well—my nerves are out of order. It is good of you to call. I——" she suddenly grasped my hand, "do you see that mouse over there? Just in that corner? That large one—there—

just there? See! Oh! It has got on the bed. Catch it—do catch it."

"There are no mice in the room, Rose. Try not to be so fanciful," said Greville. He made a manful effort to speak cheerfully.

"But there are—where are your eyes? Surely, Dr. Dale, you can see them. The room is full of them, and I always had such a horror of mice. Can't you see, both of you? Why there is a whole nest over there; little ones and big ones. Do you see those others creeping up the wall? Now they are rushing for the bed. Oh! the bed is full of them—here—and here—and here. Oh! please, *please* take them away!"

"I will give you some medicine to soothe you," I said.

"I don't want it. I only want the mice to go. The room gets more full of them each moment. Don't you see them? Can't you see?"

"No, dear," said her husband. "Try to believe that this is all due to your imagination." He patted her on the shoulder. She did not take the least notice.

"And there, just over there," she cried

suddenly turning her eyes in another direction. "Oh, I don't want to be afraid, but I am. Won't someone take it away? That gorilla just over there; oh, take it out of the room!"

"Mrs. Greville," I said, coming up to the bedside—I took her hand which she struggled to release—"remember, I am a doctor, and I know what I am saying. There are no mice or animals of any sort in the room. You think there are because you are not well."

I spoke with a voice of authority; she made a violent effort, and, lying down flat in bed, fixed her eyes again on my face.

"You are a doctor, and you ought to know best," she said at last slowly; "but see"—she started upright and pointed with her hand—"over there, just peeping round the curtain—the gorilla! It has come back again, and the mice, oh, *don't* you see them, they're climbing up the wall, up the bedpost, on to the bed? Oh, save me, save me! I cannot, cannot bear it!"

She shrieked aloud in agony. Greville knelt by her, put his arms round her and did all in his power to soothe her. At last I called him out of the room.

"I have nothing much to do to-day," I said, "and will sit with your wife."

"You'll pull her through, won't you?" he asked.

His lips were white, he looked ten years older than when he had first come to Jeyrepore.

"I will do my utmost," I answered. "But, Greville, is this the first time?"

"I don't know," he replied. "She certainly did say something about another attack when she was, good God! only eighteen, but, perhaps I dreamt it, and yet—"

"We must first get her over this, and then consider what is best to be done," I said. "I will stay by her now, and try to get her off to sleep."

The shriek of the stricken woman came through the door.

"Where are you, Ronald?" she cried, "the mice are coming in faster and faster, and the gorilla is getting near the bed. Oh, this will kill me, or I shall go mad! Ronald, come back! come back!"

He hurried to her, and I went with him.

We both nursed her between us for the rest of the day, and during that night I sat up with her.

For one so young I had seldom seen a sharper attack. Before the sleep, which was to be her salvation, was induced, she was almost worn out. At last, however, it came, and she slumbered like an infant. Her sleep lasted for twelve hours. When she awoke she was sane and calm, without the slightest craving for drink.

"For a month or three weeks," I said to her husband, "she will be as free from the drink mania as though she had never had an attack of it. During that time we must gravely consider what is best to be done for her, and now, cheer up, old man, we shall save her yet!"

He shook his head and a smile of a sickly fashion crossed his face like a spasm.

Mrs. Greville's recovery was rapid, and in a week's time she was nearly herself again. Once more she and Greville went into society—once more the beautiful young creature was surrounded by admiring friends—it was as if that short, dark cloud had never been. Not a soul in Jeyrepore, with the exception of myself, suspected the direful malady under which she laboured.

Several weeks went by, and we at Jeyrepore were all more or less on tenter hooks of expectation. Day after day we waited eagerly for news from Khotral. Day after day the tidings were more and more alarming. The fate of the beleaguered soldiers was in every one's mouth, and great was the relief when the news reached us that Colonel Kane was to lead an advance column to their relief.

On a certain morning towards the end of March I was awakened from a deep sleep by a visit from Captain Greville.

"I am off to join Kane at Singil," he said, "and my train will start in a few moments."

I raised myself on my elbow and stared at him in amazement.

"You are off to join Kane!" I cried. "But I did not know that you expected this?"

He seated himself on my little camp bed.

"They are in want of officers," he said briefly. "I have obtained leave of absence,

and am going to the base on the chance of being asked to join the force. I shall be from a week to ten days getting there through all this snow."

I was quite silent for a moment, then I said:

"You go with your wife's knowledge and approval?"

"I go with my wife's knowledge—and—approval," he replied slowly, and making a perceptible pause before the last word.

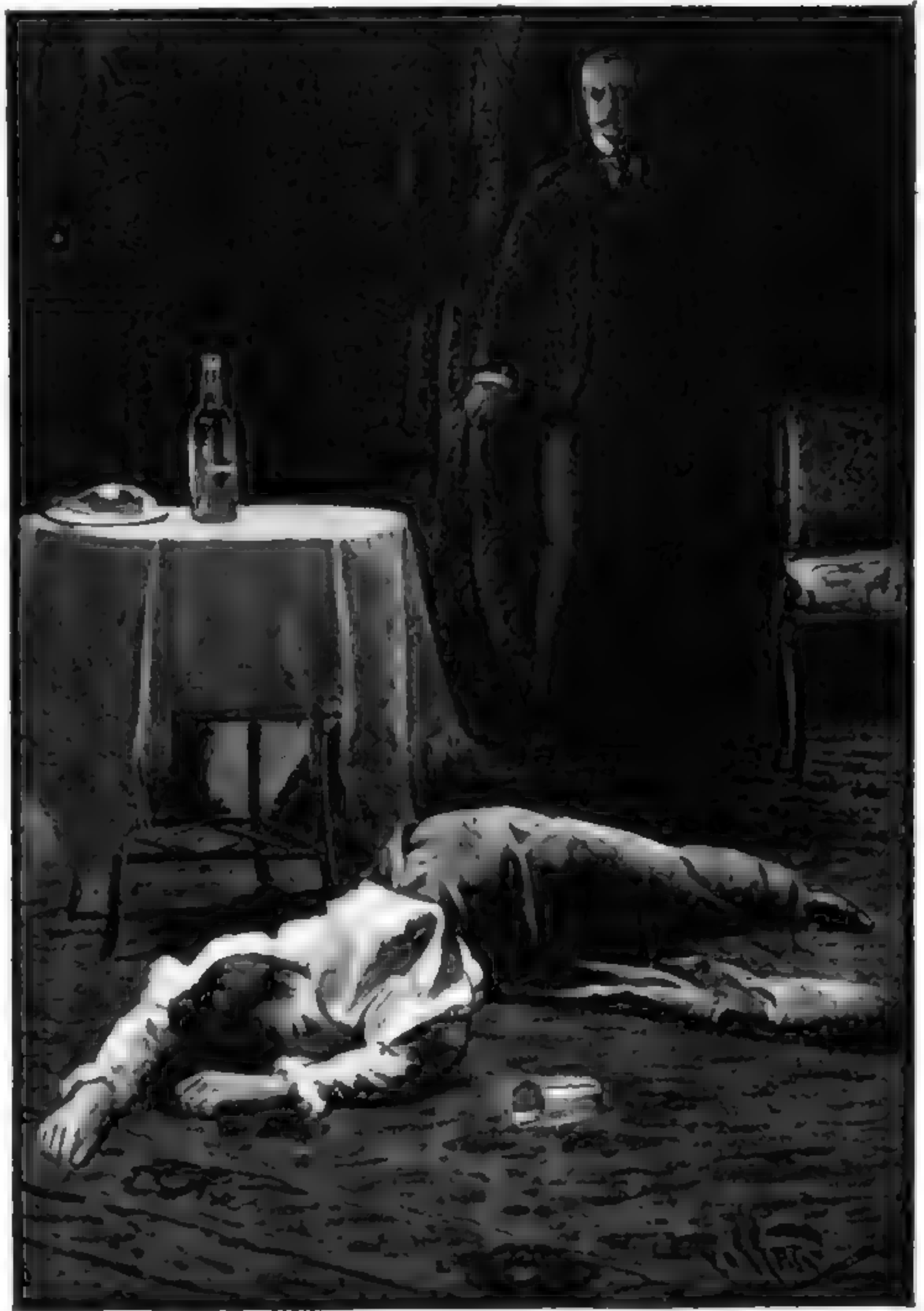
"Well, you astonish me," I said.

"Listen, Dale, I have only a moment or two left. She and I made up our minds yesterday morning. I have no doubt you guessed that she has begun it all over again. She began it ten days back. The last week has been to us both a time impossible to describe."

He stopped and looked at me—his face was white, and he was breathing quickly.

"The crisis came the day before yesterday," he continued. "Not what you think—she was not drunk; I had never seen her saner, but she came to me with a proposition. She wished me to put her to a final test. She said she knew that she was going straight to the devil, but she had a last wild hope which she thought might save her. She wanted me to promise to leave her if ever she drank again.

"I refused at first, as was but natural, but she argued and begged, and pleaded, and went on her knees and cried, poor girl!—oh, how bitterly she cried! After a few moments I really began to see, as I thought, daylight in the scheme. I believed that her love for me was stronger than her craze for drink. The fear of the parting might terrify her into giving up the cursed thing. I promised to go if she drank again, but a



"She was lying on the floor."

mere promise would not satisfy her. She told me that I must swear it. She was terribly excited, but, as I said, quite sober.

"Swear that you will do it," she cried, "and then I will swear that I will make you do it. It is my last chance—give it to me; won't you give it to me? Swear that you will go if I touch the awful thing again."

"Then I took an oath on it, and she took one also, and somehow we had just a shadow of hope, both of us, for the remainder of that day. We dined together as usual, and she was quiet and looked peaceful and like her best self. After dinner she said that she wished to be alone for a little. I looked full at her, half fearful, but not liking to show it.

She smiled at me, kissed me on my forehead, and ran out of the room.

" 'Come to me in an hour or an hour and a half,' she said.

"Then she went away, and I stayed behind and smoked and tried to believe that I was not anxious.

"Well, Dale, when I went into the drawing-room just a glance showed me, just one glance, that all was up—she was lying on the floor dead drunk. An open brandy-bottle stood on the table, and there was an emptied glass on the carpet beside her, and the room was full of the sickening smell. Ugh! it was enough to sicken anyone. I took away the brandy and glass, and opened the window wide, and sat down opposite to her. I looked hard at her as she lay in her flushed and drunken sleep; all her beauty was gone. I knew, of course, that it was all up with us both. We had vowed to part, and we must do it. If I left her now and at once I should still have the memory of her, beautiful and young, and when sober, the most perfect woman in the world; but I was well aware that as time passed she would become less and less beautiful and less perfect, until all the lovely intelligent woman went out of her and there was nothing but the beast left. I should get sick of her by-and-bye. Yes, I must go. When she awoke she looked at me in a terrified way. One glance at my face told her everything.

" 'So I have done it again?' she said.

"I nodded. I could not speak.

" 'And are you going?' she continued.

" 'Yes,' I answered. 'I shall try for leave of absence to-day, and go straight to Kane to Singil. I hope he will allow me to join his column.'

"Her face grew very white: she staggered to her feet and stood there trembling, then she turned and left the room.

"Well, I spent a busy day. I soon managed to get my leave, and all the rest of the time was taken up in preparations for my departure. She helped me with everything—we have been up and together all night, but we never alluded to the good-bye which was so near. I kissed her a few moments ago, and she did not even cry. She kissed me back gravely, and looked into my face, and did not utter a

word. In all probability I shall never see her again. If a stray bullet finds me it is all for the best. Heaven help me! I am a miserable man."

He buried his face in his hands, and when he looked up at last his eyes were wet.

"Look after her, Dale, if you can," he said, as he rose and took my hand. "Go and see her by-and-bye."

Before I could utter a word he had left me.

I called many times at Mrs. Greville's house, but it was several weeks after her husband's departure before she would see me. Then she wrote to me to go to her. When I entered her drawing-room she came at once to my side.

"I can stand this agony no longer," she said; "you pulled me through the last attack. Sit down, won't you?"

"Have you heard from your husband?" I asked.

"No, we thought it best not to write to each other—remember we are separated—for life."

"There you make a vast mistake," I answered; "you are only separated from the best fellow in the world so long as you refuse to exercise self-control."

My words evidently astonished her, and for a moment a thoughtful and brave look flitted across her face; then the recklessness returned. She laughed—her laughter was wild and unsteady.

"You don't know what you're talking about," she said. "It is not on you—the horror—it does not clutch at your heart, nor undermine your reason. Listen, I have been tipping all day. I am better without him than with him. When he was with me I had a sense of degradation now and then; now I feel nothing."

"Well," I said, "you know what it means, don't you?"

"What?" she asked

"Another attack, and soon, of delirium tremens, with perhaps death or insanity at the other side."

She shuddered.

"Are you certain of what you are saying?" she asked.

"I am quite certain. You will die or

become insane if this goes on. In all probability you will become insane."

She did not speak, but her face grew ghastly.

"And believe me," I continued, speaking very earnestly, "it is in your power to conquer this."

She shook her head.

"No," she said, "no. If I failed when I knew what failure meant—the parting from him—do you think I shall succeed now?"

"Yes, for you have a prize to win—his

"When you talk like that you rouse the angel in me which is so nearly dead," she said. "But, no, no, the craving is here, here—it burns like fire—it must be satisfied!"

"If you abstain for three weeks you can be cured," I said.

"Nonsense!"

"It is true; I know what I am saying."

"Do you mean that if I do not drink for three weeks the craving will go?"

"It will, and if it returns you will have strength to overcome it."



The men had fallen out in twos and threes, sitting down from time to time in the snow.

return and his happiness. You have broken his heart, but you can heal it again—it rests with yourself. Write to your husband to-night, Mrs. Greville, and tell him that you mean to conquer. Think what your letter will mean to him. He is in the thick of the cruelest campaign of the century, fighting for his Queen, his country, and also for you. Give him courage and hope. Your letter will raise him to the seventh heaven."

While I was speaking the old gentle look came back to her lovely face, her lips trembled, and her eyes shone.

"Then look here"—she came to my side—"take the drink away. Take everything, all the brandy and wine and eau-de-Cologne, all the intoxicants in the house. Lock them up. Here is a cupboard, and here is the key. Do it quickly, quickly, before I repent."

"I will do so," I answered. "I see by your face that you are going to be brave."

"No, I am not—the wish is over. I must have the drink—don't lock it up—I don't know what I am saying. Give me back that key. Oh, the devil has come back, and I



I saw her stagger back until she leant against the wall.

must, must satisfy him. Oh, the craving in my heart, the awful craving in my heart!"

I took no notice of her; I was determined to take the advantage which she had given me. I locked up the wine and spirits, put the key of the cupboard in my pocket, and, promising to send her in a sleeping draught, begged of her to keep up her courage, and left the house.

On my way home I went into the mess room. Here the gravest news awaited me. Colonel Kane's little force had already started on its venturesome journey to succour the garrison, but the men had been stopped at an early stage by the impossibility of taking the gun carriages and the ammunition over the snow. The mules could only flounder

about in it, and it was found impossible to take them any further. Had it not been for the splendid offer of Captain Greville and two young lieutenants, who volunteered with their men to transport the guns with the gun carriages and the ammunition over the pass, Kane would have been obliged to abandon his enterprise until a more favourable season arrived.

After twelve hours' toil the guns were brought over, but the men had fallen out in twos and threes, sitting down from time to time in the snow, as if they must give up the struggle. They were all thoroughly exhausted now, and, alas! poor Greville was one of those who completely gave way. He had been foremost in the brave enterprise, and his heroic conduct had been the praise of everyone; but now he was found to be so badly stricken with frost-bite and snow-blindness that he could not possibly proceed any further, and was left

under the charge of Surgeon-Captain Fielding, while the rest of the force pushed forward. It had been hoped that the sick man could be brought on to a place called Lascur on the following day, but neither he nor Fielding had arrived, and the gravest fears were entertained that they had either been taken prisoners, or killed, by the Khotralis.

Such was the news received in the mess room at Jeyrepore, and great was our uneasiness with regard to Greville's fate. The immediate question now was should the wife be informed or not?

After thinking for a moment, I resolved to go at once and tell her. One or two of Greville's friends rather objected to this

proceeding on my part, but I was determined, and a few minutes later I found myself back at Mrs. Greville's house. She heard my step, and came to the door to meet me.

"The devil has sent you," she cried. "I have been nearly mad. Give me back the key of that cupboard immediately!"

"No," I said. I put my hands behind me. "I want to speak to you. Come into the drawing-room."

Perhaps she saw something in my face, for a change came over hers.

"You have bad news?" she said.

"I have."

"Of him?"

I nodded.

"What is it? Is he dead?"

"I cannot tell you—news has come of the force. He has acted gallantly, as I knew he would, but he has broken down."

I then proceeded to tell her as briefly and plainly as I could exactly what had happened. To another woman I would have told these direful tidings with bated breath, endeavouring to make them as light as possible, and to infuse what miserable hope I could into them, but in Mrs. Greville's case I pursued a different course. The crushing news would not kill her—it might be her salvation. As I watched her, I saw her stagger back until she leant against the wall. When I had finished she looked straight into my face and said abruptly:

"If, Dr. Dale, you were at this moment to give me my choice of the perfect safety of my husband or that I might satisfy my craving for drink, before God in heaven I would choose the latter."

"Then God help you—you are a miserable woman!" I cried.

"He cannot help me—He has forsaken me."

She uttered a wild scream, and rushed from my presence. I heard her turning the lock of her door.

I went away after a time, for I felt that I could do nothing more for her. As I returned home it seemed to me that Greville's death would be the best news which could now come to me about him.

I spent a sleepless night, and early in the morning went back to Mrs. Greville's house

The English servant who had accompanied her from her own country came out in answer to my summons with consternation on her face.

"Oh, Dr. Dale," she cried, "my mistress has gone!"

"Gone?" I exclaimed.

"Yes. She left Jeyrepore by the first train this morning."

"Are you quite sure of what you are saying?"

"I am, sir, I saw her off. I asked her where her letters were to be forwarded to, but she said they were to be kept until she wrote. I didn't like it a bit—I wanted to go with her, but she would not hear of it."

I asked the woman a few more questions and then left her. I felt much alarmed, and my own duty seemed plain. Mrs. Greville was in the mood to do desperate things, and must be followed without delay.

I paid an early visit to my principal medical officer, obtained the required permission, and took the next train from Jeyrepore.

For ten days I looked for Mrs. Greville all along the line, but in some extraordinary way she had managed to efface herself. The railway officials remembered a lady answering to her description getting into the train at Jeyrepore; they said further that she had taken a ticket to Delhi—she had travelled in a carriage reserved for ladies only, and kept the blinds down. In the course of the journey the guard went to the carriage and found it empty. The supposition was that Mrs. Greville must have quietly slipped away at one of the small stations. Acting on this most meagre information, I visited every village within a hundred miles of Jeyrepore, but nowhere could I obtain the slightest trace of the unfortunate lady. At last I was obliged to return to my own duties, feeling much discomfited. My grave fear was that the unhappy girl had taken her life—she was in the mood to do anything.

The weeks that followed were full of misery to me, and I was about to try to obtain leave to join the Khotral Relief Force at the base in order to get, if possible, some word of Greville, when the welcome news reached us at Jeyrepore that the memorable siege was over. Still there were no tidings of Greville and

Fielding, and there was now no doubt whatever in the minds of their friends, that both the unhappy officers had been killed. After these miserable weeks of suspense, I had just made up my mind to believe the worst, and to abandon all hope, when, to my astonishment, towards the end of a fine afternoon in May, Greville walked quietly into my quarters. He sat down on the nearest chair, and did not speak for a moment.

"Good God! Greville," I cried. I stepped back. It was a shock to see him—he was much changed, my feelings were so mingled, knowing what I had to tell him, that I felt as much pain as gladness.



"Is she, is she dead?"

"Well, old man, I am back again," he said after a pause; "I have had adventures, thrilling enough if you like—for that matter daring also. Fielding and I lived with the dread of the halter round our necks, or rather the knife of the assassin, for many long weeks; but in the end we got our freedom, how I will tell you presently. When we were freed, the first thing we heard was that the war was over, so I came back here as quickly as possible. Dale, I made a mis-

take when I went. I did wrong to leave her. I find I cannot live without her. Whatever she is and whatever she does, I must go back to her on any terms. How is she, man—how is she? I thought I must come to you first—you have no bad news, I hope? Dale, you look ghastly, what is it?"

"I have very bad news," I replied gravely, "but, Greville, you are faint, let me give you something."

"I could not touch it—speak, what is it?" He stood up, supporting himself against the back of a chair. "I am all right," he continued in a husky voice. "Is she, is she dead? Don't be afraid to tell me the truth; but is it as bad as that?"

"It is as bad as it can be," I answered; "the fact is this, I know nothing about her."

"Nothing about her! You must be dreaming."

"I am not. She left Jeyrepore on the morning after the news of your disappearance reached us. I broke that news to her myself, it came late at night. She took it—never mind that part now, she was not quite herself; I went to her early the next morning but she had gone. The maid informed me that she had left Jeyrepore by the first train. I obtained leave of absence and followed her

by the next. I spent nearly a fortnight looking for her up and down the line, but not a trace could I discover."

"Then you fear?" said Greville.

He came close up to me and peered into my face—an awful grey look had crept into his.

"You fear? Speak, Dale!" he said.

"I have my fears, but they may be unfounded," I said.

"Good God!" he cried, "has it come to

this? You think that she has taken her life? Then if that is so I am the one to blame. Oh, how often I thought of her when I was a captive with those brutes! She was ill—it was not her fault that she drank—had she not the cursed madness in her blood? I neglected her—I have killed her!”

He staggered into the nearest chair, and fainted dead away.

I managed to restore consciousness, and then found that the poor fellow was very ill. He had a sharp renewal of the fever which he had already contracted among the Khotralis. For the next few days he was at death's door. I would not send him to the hospital, but nursed him in my own quarters. I watched by him day and night, and towards the end of the third day I thought he must die, for his weakness was extreme and terrible to witness. The sufferings of his mind re-acted on his body, and, try as I would, I could not get the fever under. He had a fixed idea that his wife was dead, and that he had been the cause. The horrible remorse that attacked him was driving him to his grave.

On the evening of that day I almost gave up hope. I would have given all my substance gladly at that moment to get the slightest news of Mrs. Greville. I went out of Greville's sick room, and was just preparing to cross the compound when the woman I had been thinking so earnestly about stood before me. She came up to me quite quietly, and held out her hand.

“Take me somewhere,” she said in a breathless voice. “I want to see you for a few moments—take me where we can be alone.”

“Are you an angel, or are you really in the flesh?” I could not help asking.

“There is nothing of the angel about me,” she said; “I am in the flesh. I must speak to you, and quickly.”

I wondered if she really knew that her husband was in my quarters. I took her into my sitting-room, and shut the door.

“No one in all the world could be more welcome than you are at this moment,” I said. “Where have you been, what have you done, why have you come back?”

“I will answer your questions as quickly as I can,” she said, “and the last first. I have come back because I am cured.”

“Cured?” I cried.

“Yes. Let me tell you my story. I returned to tell it to you; afterwards I must go back again to the place from which I have come.”

I waited for her to speak; she looked at me, and for the first time her lips trembled.

“Have you any tidings for me?” she asked, and her voice faltered.

“First tell me your story,” I said. She turned very pale.



She came up to me quite quietly, and held out her hand.

"I know you can have no good tidings," she said, "it is my just punishment. Dr. Dale, when you left me on that awful night I was as mad as woman could be. I had come to a crisis, and all of a sudden I saw myself as I really was. Those awful words I had uttered when I declared that I would rather have drink than my husband's life, struck home as nothing had ever done yet. I was sure that God would take him from me; it was my most just punishment. All in a moment the longing for drink left me, I could think of nothing but those awful words. Towards morning I remembered something you had said, that if I would abstain from drink for three weeks I might be saved.

"I believed that my husband was dead, and I thought no punishment too dreadful to bestow upon myself—to do without drink for three weeks seemed to me just then the most awful thing that could happen. I was determined to abstain just because I wished to hurt myself. All of a sudden a memory flashed through my mind. I had noticed as we came up here the leper villages which were scattered at intervals through the jungle.

"If I went to one I might get the leprosy and finally die, but I might also nurse the miserable creatures, and while with them I should be out of the way of all intoxicants. I was desperate and scarcely knew what I was doing. I hastily made up my mind to go. I left Jeyrepore by the first train the next morning, took a ticket for Delhi, managed to evade the guard, and slipped out of the train when no one was looking.

"An awful time followed, but by-and-bye I reached the jungle and found a village, and for the last six weeks I have been day and night in the company of those poor creatures. I have nursed them, and some of them have learned to love me. Their sufferings were at least equal to my own, and they nerved me to bear my own; all the time I knew he was dead, that God had taken him because of the awful thing I had said. I was mad with misery, and the craving was torture beyond words. But the weeks went by slowly; and also slowly but surely the craving got less, until at last it has gone—gone utterly. I know that I am cured now. For a fortnight I have not had the slightest desire for drink. A longing came over me to come back just to tell you. I shall return to the leper village to-morrow—my life-work is with these poor creatures and——"

"No, pardon me, your life work is not with them," I interrupted. "You are a brave woman; you have conquered in a most bitter fight, and now you shall have your reward."

"What do you mean?"

"Come with me."

I motioned to her to tread softly, and opening a door led her into her husband's presence.

I left them alone together.

Of course Greville recovered, and now those two are the happiest pair in the world. Mrs. Greville's redemption was sharp and cruel, but effectual.





Being the Strange Experiences of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

No. IV.—MAJOR CAPELL'S HONOUR.

WE had just brought a small campaign against one of the border tribes in India to a successful conclusion, and had returned to Barhi, where the regiment with which I was then engaged as medical officer was quartered. On a certain evening, almost immediately after our arrival, Major Capell called to see me. He belonged to an infantry regiment, the Royal Irish Rangers, and was a great favourite with his men. I had seldom met a more genial, kind-hearted fellow.

When Capell first came amongst us, more than a year ago, he had been accompanied by his wife, a pretty woman, whose name before her marriage had been Lady Mildred Lefroy. She was a widow when he married her, and report said that her *beaux yeux* had executed much destruction in many quarters. Be that as it may, she soon established herself in Barhi as one of its most attractive hostesses, winning hearts wherever she went, and never in the least degree losing her own.

Lady Mildred was pretty without being beautiful. She had a face full of vivacity, and capable of marked changes. At times she looked almost plain, at other times she approached actual loveliness. There was a story afloat, which might or might not have any truth in it, to the effect that the colonel of Capell's regiment had sought in vain for the hand of Lady Mildred. Be that as it

may, he was now very friendly with her, and Capell and he to all appearances were sworn comrades. Both these officers had been engaged in the little skirmish with the tribesmen to which I have just alluded, and we doubtless owed our speedy victory to the Colonel's courage and admirable knowledge of the different stratagems of war. Capell was his right hand in the campaign, and invariably accompanied him into action.

Now that matters were quiet again, we were preparing for our usual move to Jeyrepore, which must take place almost immediately, as the hot weather was coming on. I was surprised, therefore, when Capell flung himself into the easiest chair my room contained, and, looking me full in the face, said:

"Here's a pretty state of things; but there's nothing else to be done."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I am off," was his response.

"Off?" I answered. "To Jeyrepore—do you go before the rest of us?"

"I am off to England," was the answer.

"Lucky dog, you!" I replied.

"You would not think so if you were in my shoes." Here he got up, walked towards the door, and shut it. "Can I confide in you, Dale?" he asked.

"Undoubtedly," I replied, wondering considerably what could be up.

"I am about to resign my post as Major in Her Majesty's Irish Rangers."

"The dickens you are!" I cried. "Why it was only last week I had a talk with that good wife of yours—she was full of ambition for you. Lady Mildred is a real soldier's wife. Capell, this is awfully sudden—what is wrong?"

"Listen, won't you? I will just tell you the rights of it."

I seated myself and looked full at the Major. He was a very young man for the rank, having, owing to a series of circumstances,

"Man to man I will," was my reply.

"What is your candid opinion with regard to me?"

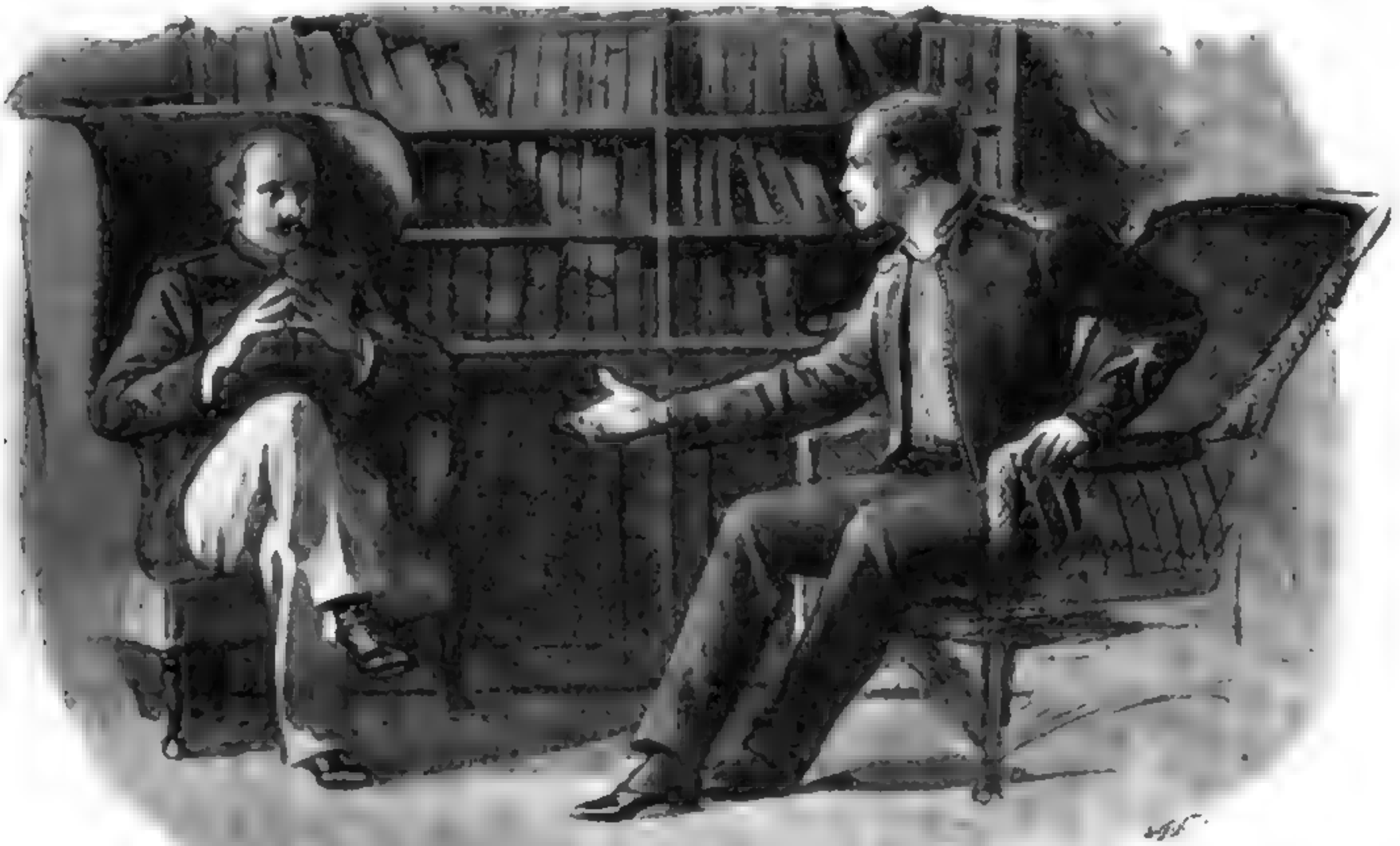
"That you are a first-rate fellow," I said promptly—"a brave soldier and a credit to Her Majesty's army."

"Thanks—you mean all that, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly; why should you suspect that it would be otherwise?"

"I suspect everyone I look at. I think they must see me as I know myself to be."

"You are hipped, Capell," was my reply



"You see before you the veriest coward that ever breathed."

got his majority nearly ten years sooner than most. He had a downright, frank sort of face, neither remarkable for good looks nor the reverse. His eyes were grey and deeply set; his short hair stood upright above his white brow; the rest of his face was tanned to a deep brown. He had an athletic frame and long, graceful limbs.

"Well," I said, when he did not speak for a moment, but kept on gazing at me.

"It is an awful business," he said. Then very shortly, and, making an effort to pull himself together:

"Man to man will you answer me a straightforward question, Dale?"

to this. "Your nerves are out of order; let me prescribe a tonic. A tonic and the air of the hills will soon pull you together. Don't let us hear any more nonsense of your retiring from the service."

"Listen. I must speak to you, Dale. I believe you are an honest fellow, and you always say what you think. Now for the facts of the case. You see before you the veriest coward that ever breathed."

"Nerves, nerves," I repeated under my breath.

"You may or may not be right; and the whole thing may be due to insufficiently nourished nerves, or something of that sort,

but, true or false, the fact remains, I am a coward. There is a weak spot in me somewhere, and on occasions it pulls me down. Because I am a coward, and because I know it, I resign my commission in Her Majesty's service."

"By whose advice do you commit this act of supreme folly?"

"By the orders of Colonel Moore."

"Never!" I answered, springing to my feet.

"Fact, I assure you."

"Well, this is a rum go; you must explain yourself, Capell."

"I will do so. I don't know whether Moore has a grudge against me or not—perhaps he has. You may or may not have heard a report that Moore was in love with Mildred. As a matter of fact, we both proposed to her on the same day—Moore in the morning, I in the evening. It was in London two years ago. I had not the slightest idea that Moore wished for her. She refused him and accepted me, although, of course, Moore was far and away the better man. He took it very well, but all the same it was a deuced unpleasant thing, as we were both in the same regiment, and Moore was hard hit.

"I thought it best to see him and have the thing out, but he would not talk it over. He said it was the chances of war, and that it was all right; but since then, although I have no reason to say so, I think he bears me a grudge. I may be wrong, and God forgive me if it is so. When I married Mildred I had not yet seen active service.

"A year ago we came here, and you know these little frontier raids are always cropping up, and a man never knows when his life may be in jeopardy. I was right glad when my turn came to go to the front, for a bit of active fighting seemed to me to be just what I wanted. I was as jolly as a sandboy when I bade Mildred good-bye, and started off with the rest of you to Pinder Range. Well, you were with us all through the affair, and know that there was nothing in it from first to last."

"Not much danger at any rate," I replied.

"Faugh! no danger at all; and I am sound of limb, and I believe that my brain is all right. Nevertheless, on the morning when

we got into action I awoke with the queerest feeling, a sort of trembling which did not appear, but which seemed to shake the strength out of me. I had it when we started, and it kept getting worse and worse every hour.

"Then also I began to be troubled by a horrid memory. When a child I had always a horror of blood. On one occasion my brother, now in his grave, cut himself badly—he severed an artery, and there he was bleeding to death, while I, an older chap, instead of helping him, lay in a dead faint on the ground by his side. Frank recovered to die later on of something else, and I was so bitterly ashamed of myself that I got quite ill, and had to be sent from home.

"Well, of course I forgot all this and so did everybody else; but shortly after I joined the regiment a poor fellow was brought in one day with his head badly smashed. The moment I looked at him I was off again in a faint. I just dropped down as if someone had shot me. I got hold of a tonic, and dosed myself, and thought little more about it. But on that morning ten days ago, Dale, when we were marching to the front, the thought of those two occasions kept coming to me again and again, and all the time I had that queer trembling for no cause whatever.

"All of a sudden we spotted the enemy, and Moore dashed forward and began to pot them right and left. Of course he meant me to follow him and to bring up my men. What do you think I did instead? Without rhyme or reason I turned tail and as fast as I could began to make for shelter. I had not gone a dozen yards before I knew what I was about and recovered myself. I got my men together, we turned back, and of course won the day, and there were only two casualties. I don't think those poor fellows would tell on me to save their lives, but all the same they saw what I did. Not one of them would look me full in the face; and I guessed all too surely that my shame was theirs. It never occurred to me, however, that Moore saw—on the contrary he was in the best of spirits, and congratulated me on the victory that we had won, and I hoped that only my men knew. By the way, you didn't hear it whispered, did you, Dale?"

"Never," I answered, "not a syllable"—but I was looking at my friend in consternation.

"Ah, I see what you think of me," he said.

"Go on, tell me the rest," I answered, and in spite of myself my voice had dropped to a whisper.

"There is not much more to tell. We came back here, and yesterday Moore sent for me. He told me quite frankly that he had seen everything. He asked me to explain myself. I told him just what I have told you. He said it was a pity, for of course it was a physical infirmity, but that there was no help for it. I must leave the army."

"The thing is positive to leak out," he said. "Although your own men are faithful, some of them in the end will whisper it about. There is no place for you in the service, Capell; and you had best clear out at once before any mischief is done."

"Well, Dale, I am going to take his advice."

Here the Major paused to wipe the moisture from his brow.

"I cannot account for it myself," he said. "If I could kill myself I would."

I did not know what reply to make. I began to pace up and down the room. Capell kept on glancing at me without speaking. After a time he stood up and seemed to pull himself together.

"There is no help for it," he remarked.

"If I were you I would stay and fight it out," I cried.

"I turned tail and as fast as I could began to make for shelter"



"I cannot; the Colonel does not wish it."

"Let me go and have a talk with him."

"No good, Dale; no good whatever. You are the kindest-hearted chap in the world, but it would be of no avail. Moore saw me funk in sight of the enemy. I turned tail. My own men saw the deed. Fifty times better cut the thing now. Yes, I shall cut it and go to the dogs somewhere else."

"How old are you, Capell?" I asked, after a pause.

"Five-and-thirty."

"You don't want your whole life to be spoiled, do you?"

"It is spoiled; I shall never get over this. I am done for, and must go under."

"What about Lady Mildred?" I asked, after a pause.

When I mentioned her name, I noticed under all his tan that the colour receded from the poor fellow's face.

"Dale," he said, after a pause, "it is the thought of her which makes it so bitter. This is just the thing to break her heart, but she will never show it. She is just the sort of woman to despise me."

"You must be mistaken," I answered.

"I am not. I shall have to tell her, and she will despise me. Do you know why she chose me in preference to Moore?"

"Because she liked you best," I answered.

"Well, that too, of course; but a little incident occurred on the day when we two men both proposed for the same woman, which turned the scale in my favour. The fact is it was my luck to rescue a little chap from under a horse's feet in Regent Street. The boy was knocked down by an omnibus, and I just caught him by the collar in the nick of time. One of the horses kicked me as I was doing it, and I rolled under myself. I got between the wheels, and it is a miracle that I was not killed. Mildred was standing on the pavement when I rescued the boy. She told me afterwards how it excited her, and how her heart beat. When I proposed for her she accepted without hesitation."

"I love you because you are a brave man," she said. 'I always made up my mind that my husband should be the bravest man in the world.' Think, Dale, what she will feel to-night when I tell her my news. Well, there is nothing for it but to go. I am practically snuffed out. Yes, I am sorry for Mildred, deuced sorry."

He left me and I sat down to consider if by any possibility I might interfere in the matter. The more I thought, however, the more I perceived how hopeless it really was. The Colonel had without any doubt right on his side. Capell was in reality as brave as a man is made, but he had a physical infirmity. He was better out of the army than in it.

I wondered how Lady Mildred would take

the news. With all her brightness, courage and go, with all her sunny and sympathetic manner, I could not help suspecting that there was a hard side to her character. I thought it quite on the cards that an occasion might arise when she could be almost cruel. Capell was desperately fond of her. His only chance lay now in the way his wife treated him. What a curse these nerves were! Why should a man like Capell, a right brave fellow, sound to the heart's core, be affected by them to his own undoing?

Soon it was the talk of the messroom that Capell was going. His fellow officers wondered, and discussed the thing all round, but I do not think anyone had the real clue. He and Lady Mildred started soon afterwards for England. I happened to meet her the evening before they left Barhi.

"You know the truth?" she said. She held out her hand to me as she spoke.

"Yes," I answered. "It is a most pitiable story. Believe me, Lady Mildred, he is not to blame."

"No," she answered, and her lips curled disdainfully; "cowards are made so by God Almighty. It is an enigma which I cannot solve. I could only wish that I were in Major Capell's shoes."

"What would you do?" I asked.

"Live it down, of course," she replied. "He is simply mad to go. If he had the pluck of a baby, he would live this thing down. I believe I could teach him never to act so again."

"No, you could not," I replied. "It is a physical ailment, and it is quite possible that it may be incurable. The poor fellow is terribly put out, for a braver spirit in reality never breathed. Be good to him, if you can, for he feels this thing terribly."

She made no reply, but I noticed that the pupils of her eyes dilated, and that her lips trembled. She turned her head aside. A moment later she bade me good-bye.

When the Capells went away I had no intention of returning myself to England that year, but soon afterwards circumstances made it necessary for me to do so. When I arrived in England I found everyone talking about the Graeco-Turkish war. I had no billet at the time, and, as medical men were urgently



I saw the well-known figure of Lady Mildred Capell.

needed, before I quite knew what I was doing, I had volunteered for active service with the Greeks. The unfortunate people were almost without doctors at the time, and horrible stories of the sufferings of the wounded reached us by each mail. With my large experience of war, and my medical knowledge, I had little doubt that I should be accepted by the Greek army, and such proved to be the case.

On board the boat which was conveying me across the Channel I saw, to my unbounded astonishment, the well-known figure of Lady Mildred Capell. She was dressed very quietly in dark blue, and wore a nurse's bonnet and dress. On her sleeve I saw a Red Cross badge. When her eyes rested upon me her astonishment was equal to my own. I went up to her eagerly.

"In the name of heaven, what is the meaning of this?" I cried.

"I have volunteered to help the Greek wounded," was her reply. "And what are you doing, Dr. Dale?"

"I am also on my way to help the Greek wounded," I answered with a laugh, which was rather forced, for there was an expression in her eyes which told me to prepare for bad news.

"How strange," she said; then she continued, after a pause, endeavouring to speak cheerfully, "the fact is I learnt nursing long ago. Before I married I was trained at St. Thomas's Hospital. I regard this as a dispensation from heaven—I shall forget myself in helping others to bear their pains."

"How is your husband?" I asked, after a pause.

She did not reply at once. Then with her face slightly turned from me she said abruptly:

"He has left me."

"What! I do not believe it," I cried. Her lips trembled.

"Let us go to the other end of the deck, Dr. Dale. I don't want my fellow passengers to hear what I am saying."

We did so—she turned and faced me.

"I am the most miserable woman on God's earth," she cried. "I have quarrelled with him, and he has gone."

"I am truly sorry to hear it," I answered; "he is the sort of man who would feel this intensely. God forgive you, Lady Mildred; sometimes I am tempted to say that I cannot understand women. A man would not hit another man when he is down."

"Don't!" she cried with passion; "it is cruel of you to press my sin home to me. There! I will tell you everything."

She raised her hand to her eyes, not to dash away tears, for there were none; but perhaps to remove some dimness from her vision. She then began to talk in an eager, low voice.

"You know our story up to the time of our leaving Barhi. When we reached England I wanted him to go into the country. I thought we might take a small house there and bury ourselves. As to living it down, that was hopeless; he had done a thing which could never be lived down, which only the grave might cover. His honour as a soldier was sullied; it was with the most terrible difficulty that I could keep from despising him.

"There were nights when I used to cry to God to help me, but it was no use. Day and night I always saw that one awful picture. That terrible scene at Pinder Range kept presenting itself again and again before my eyes. My husband leading his men *away* from danger, my husband *retreating* in front of the enemy—oh, it was awful! At last I verily believe I got a sort of monomania on the subject; try as I would I could think of nothing else. I seemed always and always to see the look on his face when he did it. Oh, you know, you must know, how a brave man looks when he turns coward. To hear of his death on the field of battle would have been ecstasy compared to what I was suffering.

"We took rooms in London, and our friends came about us; and we even went out a little. Every one wondered why Mark had left the army. We were very poor, too, as we had never much to live on except his pay; but I didn't mind that part. It was the degradation

and the necessity for concealment which caused the iron to enter my soul.

"At last a day came when I could stand it no longer. He had been moody and good-for-nothing for a long time—he had terrible silent fits, when I could not get him to utter a word—his gloom was deepening and deepening—it used to madden me to look at him. I regretted deeply that I had ever married him. That day in his presence I suddenly burst out crying. He started at the sound of my sobs, and asked me what was up. I told him that he had not only broken my heart, but that my feelings for him were completely changed. Dr. Dale, I never saw anything like the look on his face. I see it now, but all he said was :

" 'You make it very hard for me.'

"Then I answered :

" 'For heaven's sake do something; don't sit with your hands before you. Is there no way by which you can retrieve your stained honour?'

" 'I will think of something,' he answered. He left the room quite quietly, and a moment or two afterwards I heard him closing the front door.

"Something about the look on his face, and also his words, frightened me in spite of myself, but still I was not really alarmed. At dinner time he did not return, but, as he often dined at his club, I thought nothing of that. In the course of the evening a letter was brought to me. It was in my husband's handwriting. In some surprise, and also fear, I opened it. There were but a few lines within.

" 'My dearest,' he wrote, 'I have taken you at your word, and you will not see me again until, God grant it, I have retrieved my honour. Mildred, I have made up my mind; I will conquer my physical infirmity or die.'

"That was the whole of the letter, Dr. Dale; I know it by heart, so I repeat it to you exactly as he wrote it. I was frenzied after I had read it, for I saw what I had done. I had driven him away from me, and in all probability he would go to certain destruction. I caused inquiries to be made, and made them myself, but from that hour I have not heard a word from or of my husband."

"And how long ago was that?" I asked.

"Nearly three weeks. You cannot guess what I have lived through. Dr. Dale, what do you think of it all?"

"I don't know what to think," I answered, "except that from what I know of Capell he will keep his word."

"You think he will retrieve his honour?"

"Either that, Lady Mildred, or he will die."

"Oh, my God!" She clasped her hands, and now the tears rolled in heavy drops down her cheeks.

"I bore the agony for a fortnight," she continued; "then I felt I could not live in idleness any longer, so I volunteered to go to Greece. I can be of use as a nurse; and if I happen to die so much the better."

Our interview at this point was cut short, and I had not an opportunity of seeing her by herself during the remainder of our journey. From time to time, however, during the heavy work which immediately followed, I heard her name spoken. She was one of the first nurses to volunteer for the seat of war. Her enthusiasm and bravery, her skill and kindness, were often mentioned by men whom I happened to meet. I earnestly wished that it had been our lot to work in the same hospital, but this was not the case.

I was sent immediately to Agrassa, where my time was taken up continually in attending to the wounded. We went through a

very terrible period, for at that stage of the war the medical department was under the most unfavourable conditions. Operations had to be performed without the administration of anæsthetics, and limbs which could not possibly be preserved were not amputated, simply because the necessary surgical instruments had not arrived.

On a certain night, after a spell of duty which had lasted for over fourteen hours, I

lay down to sleep on a stretcher used for transporting the wounded. I had hardly dozed off before the principal doctor of the hospital woke me, saying that all the wounded men must get up and march.

I was horrified, and asked the meaning of such an order.

"I cannot tell you," was his reply. "The order is stringent, and must be obeyed at once. All those who can be moved are to clear out of this without an instant's delay."

I started to my feet and began to help the poor fellows—some of them could hardly totter, and most, if not all, were in an unfit state to go through the least fatigue. As I helped them into their uniforms I wondered much what could be up, but I had little time for thought. The doctors were in a frantic state of hurry—there was an uneasy, startled expression on each face.

In less than twenty minutes we found ourselves in the streets, and in the midst of a



I began to help the poor fellows.

mob of excited people. The night was very dark, and our orders were to march straight into the country. The real meaning of all this had not as yet penetrated into my brain. We soon left the town behind us and proceeded as quickly as we could along the country roads—here we were joined by batteries of Greek artillery, mule trains, carts, and waggons laden with household effects. There were also many women and children crying and wringing their hands.

In the distance I saw a bright light, showing me where certain villages were burning. All of a sudden the full meaning of what was taking place flashed through me. There was not a doubt of it. The army—the Greek army—was in full retreat! The dread of the Turks had turned these men's heads, and an awful wave of cowardice was passing over them. For a moment I felt inclined to turn back, and at least to make a stand on my own account, but I soon saw that I had no choice in the matter. I was pressed forward by the ever-increasing crowd, and just then, when the overpowering meaning of the dastardly thing was filling my brain, I heard a strange sound, the most paralysing and awful which has ever greeted my ears. At first it was nothing more than a distant growl, but it quickly rose to a sharp, shrill roar, which soon almost reached a yell. With lightning speed the terrible noise approached us, and in a moment we understood what it meant.

"The Turks are upon us! Run! run! The Turks are here!" were the words shouted, and screamed in every imaginable accent of terror. The next instant a dozen horsemen, accompanied by a few riderless steeds, appeared on our left at full gallop. Their shout was now a perfect frenzy. "Run, run, the Turks are here!"

The effect was beyond description. The retreat became a stampede. Women, children, and soldiers made one mad rush forward; a great many fell as they ran, and were trampled to death on the spot. Vehicles of every description were overturned. The scene could only be compared to a pandemonium.

But worse was to follow. In their intense terror the soldiers and armed officers were completely demoralised, and they began to

fire their rifles in every direction. The frantic men could not discern friend from foe—they fired at each other, knocking down several of the wounded, and doing more damage in five minutes than the Turks could have done had they really appeared.

We now found ourselves on the borders of a wide plain, broken, uneven, and miles in extent; the night was black as pitch, but from moment to moment the place was lit up by the constant flashes of fire from the rifles. Never before in my whole life had I witnessed anything so wild.

In this maddened crowd I struggled on as best I could. I was powerless—it was impossible for me to go back. The terrible thought that I, a soldier in Her Majesty's service, was in retreat from the enemy almost stunned me.

All of a sudden, lit up by the lurid glare of the constant firing, I saw a sight which caused my heart to thump with joy. A gallant officer rode quickly past. As he did so he presented his revolver, and shouted in a stentorian voice: "Cease firing! Halt! Cease firing!" His face was aglow; anger, contempt, courage, despair, each and all of these emotions in quick succession illuminated his features. For one second he appeared in our midst, the next he had vanished like a whirlwind, but I knew him. Yes, thank God, I knew him—he was Major Capell!

In the midst of all other emotions I owed to a glad rush of thankfulness. The man had got over his cowardice—he was removing the stain from his honour. My first impulse was to follow him, but where? Making a mad effort I rushed forward, but was soon thrown down by the crowd behind. I regained my feet, but was once more trampled down by scores of fugitives, and one man as he ran past turned suddenly, and raising his rifle within three inches of my head fired. I ducked and fell just in time, thus saving my life.

When the morning broke the worst of this mad stampede of terror was over, and the Greeks had ceased firing on one another. We now found ourselves scattered all over the great plain, which I perceived was bounded by a precipice on the right, and by low-lying

hills on the left. About a hundred yards from where I stood I saw that there was a thick belt of under-wood. I was stiff and bruised, and had received an ugly wound in the left wrist. I was utterly spent, and felt that I could not keep on my feet another moment. It occurred to me that I would creep in under the trees and lie down for half-an-hour.

I had just reached my proposed shelter when I heard a voice speaking in the English tongue. I looked round eagerly, and to my unbounded delight saw Capell. He was lying in ambush under some shrubs. He stretched out his arm and pulled me towards him.

"What brought you here?" he cried. "The sight of you is little short of salvation. Dale, old boy, I am glad to see you. Creep in under these shrubs; I must speak to you at once."

I got quickly into the cover he pointed out, and not a moment too soon, for steady firing had now commenced from the adjacent hills, and I had little doubt that the Turks were really on us at last.

"What is the matter? How did you come here?" I asked of him.

"Never mind that part now. I volunteered to fight for the Greeks a little time past. I have been in the country for several weeks. But, listen, Dale. There are some women and children, and several of them badly wounded, too, in that hut to the right, just over there." He pointed with his hand, and, following the direction of his eyes, I saw a small wooden shanty not fifty yards away.

"In that mad firing last night no one



He presented his revolver.

escaped," he continued. "Several of the women and children suffered. A great number were killed out and out, but I have managed to rescue a couple of dozen, and they are in there. Listen, Dale. I mean to defend them. The poor things were shot down by their own friends, for each man's hand was against his brother in that horrible hour."

"How did you get them into the hut?" I asked.

"God knows; I bundled them in somehow. It was a child's scream that did it. I could not stand that. One of those brutes had turned, and, firing on his fellow, had managed to hit a baby. I lifted it in my arms. It struggled, and seemed to writhe all over just for a minute. Then it lay still. It was dead.

And the mother rushed up, and seized it; and gave a scream, and fainted. Mother and dead child, and a lot of other women are in that hut now. Most of them are hurt in one way or another. You had best go in, and see what you can do for them, Dale."

"A question first," I answered. "How are you, Capell?"

"Down on my luck. I have been looking out for a stray bullet to give me my *quietus*; but no such good fortune for me."

"What in the name of Heaven do you want to die for now?" I asked. "I saw you in the thick of it last night. Why, man, you are cured, and——"

"Hush!" he interrupted authoritatively. He sprang from my side, left his ambush, and crouched down in a listening attitude.

"Make for the hut at once, for mercy's sake," he exclaimed, turning to me. "Look after those poor creatures while there is time—the Turks are on us at last."

"And you?" I asked.

"I will come with you to guard the entrance—they can only get to those women over my dead body."

He and I made a rush for the door, and he pushed me through. I had just time to see that a long ridge to our left was strongly held by the enemy when I found myself in semi-darkness. A low wailing noise smote on my ears from within—without a Turkish battery had already opened fire.

I soon got accustomed to the dim light, and saw that the hut contained about a dozen women and as many children. Amongst the former I recognised with a pang of horror an Englishwoman. She was lying stretched out flat in a corner of the hut, and groans at intervals passed her lips. I ran and bent over her. God in heaven! she was Lady Mildred Capell. How had she got here? I had not the least idea that she had been sent to Agrassa. She was unconscious, and as I handled her gently I perceived that she had received a wound in the neighbourhood of the left lung.

I had no time to reflect on the strangeness of the coincidence, the husband and wife so close together, and yet neither knowing that the other was near. A Greek woman approached my side and offered some

information. I had picked up a few words of the language, and managed to understand her. She informed me that the nurse had received a bullet wound just as she was entering the hut.

"She was a good nurse," repeated the woman, "an angel from heaven. She had just saved my child when the bullet found her. She and the brave soldier got us all in here. We should have been dead now if it were not for them."

Just then Lady Mildred opened her eyes, fixed them on my face, and a look of recognition filled them.

"Where am I?" she cried. "Oh, Dr. Dale, is that you? How glad I am to see you. But what is the matter? What has happened?"

"Stay as quiet as you can," I answered. "You have been wounded, but I trust not dangerously—the less you speak, however, the better."

Hæmorrhage had set in, but not to a great extent. I hoped that the lung itself was not pierced by the bullet. I had no instruments with me for removing it, and could do but little. I bound up the wound as well as I could, and the Greek woman, who had already spoken, now came to my side and proffered a cup of water. How she managed to obtain the water I could never understand. I held it to Lady Mildred's lips. She took a few sips, and then seemed considerably revived. All of a sudden she clutched hold of my arm and began to speak quickly and with excitement.

"Dr. Dale, you said something which I can never forget. It was this. *No man would hit another when he was down.* I—I feel the weakness, the inconsistency of my womanhood. I was full of remorse before, but your words half killed me. It is the pain, the remorse, which is sending me to my grave—this wound is nothing. If I never see my husband again—God help me, I shall lose my reason."

"But you are certain to see him," I answered. "The fact is this, Lady Mildred—I have good, excellent news for you—your husband——"

The words had scarcely passed my lips before the little hut was shaken to its very

foundations. A shell had burst a few yards away outside. The terrified women and children made a rush for the door. I pushed them back, told them by signs and motions that the danger was past, and, opening the door, went out myself. The vast plain was now a scene of active hostilities. Lines of Turkish skirmishers had advanced from every quarter. The miserable Greeks were flying in all directions, each man seeking the nearest shelter. Columns of smoke rose up among them as they ran, showing how relentlessly they were pursued by the Turkish gunners. From time to time I saw shells exploding in the very centre of the retreating Greeks. Turkish marksmen, who were perched on the spurs of the hills, kept up a long range of fire on the hapless fugitives.

It needed but a glance to show me that the hut in which the Greek women and children were sheltering was in the gravest danger. I looked eagerly around for Capell—to my horror I perceived that he was nowhere in sight. At any moment a shell might explode upon the roof over our heads—I thought of Lady Mildred and shuddered at the imminence of her peril. At any cost these helpless women and children must be saved, but what was I to do. At that instant Capell came rushing back.

"I must stop this somehow," he cried; "they are sending their shells right over the hut—of course they do not know that women and children are hiding here. The hut must be saved, Dale; at any cost, the hut must be saved."

"Yes," I answered. I went up close to him, for in the roar of battle we could scarcely hear our own voices. I shouted in his ear:

"Do you know who is inside?"

"No—how strange you look, Dale."

"Keep up your courage—your wife is in that hut."

"My wife! Are you mad?"

"No; come and see her. Not a moment for explanations now. Come, Capell."

I re-entered the hut, and he followed me. The next instant he had dropped on his knees beside the wounded woman. There was a look on his face which I had never seen before on human countenance. It was

a wondering, half-startled, half-glad look, the sort of expression which a man could only wear when he had got that part of him which belongs to the devil well in hand. The wife gazed straight up into his eyes. Her astonishment was quickly over. At such a supreme moment nothing was too wonderful to happen.

"Mark," she said.

"Yes, I am here, Mildred."

"How very glad I am to see you. You will forgive me?"

"What for?"

"For letting you go, and for treating you as I did. For God's sake say quickly that you will forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive on my side."

"I am full of remorse for the way I treated you."

The noise of the battle prevented my hearing any more. After a time, however, the following words reached my ears:

"No time for explanations now," I heard Lady Mildred say. "Mark, I am wounded, but not dangerously. We have not an instant to lose. There are twelve women in this hut, and as many children. They are all in terrible danger. I know what is going on outside. The firing must be stopped, and I have thought of a way."

"What do you mean?" asked Capell.

"I think we can do it, you and I together; that is, if you will help me."

"I don't understand you, but I'll do anything."

"It requires pluck."

"All right."

She looked up at him as if she would read him through.

"Mark," she said—then, stretching out her hand, and tightening it on his arm—

"Mark, I want to go with you right out on to the plain; I want to face the enemy with you. I think, if we two get in front of the enemy, we can compel them to stop."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I am weak and giddy from loss of blood, but, if necessary, you could carry me. When the enemy see you carrying a woman, they will stop firing. No soldiers would fire direct on a woman. When they stop, we can parley with them, and we



Lady Mildred, snatching the sword and flag, held them aloft.

can point out the hut. We can tell them of the lives here, of the women and children—little children, Mark; don't you understand? We can go, and you can hold up a flag of truce. Quick, quick, let us do it at once! There is not a moment to lose."

"They may kill you," he answered.

"What of that? What if they kill us both—only two against twelve women and as many children—it is the only thing in the world to be done."

"It is," he cried; his face was all aglow.

first it had not the slightest effect; the firing never wavered for an instant. In all probability the enemy did not even see him. Then just for an instant a cheer broke out from a body of Turks who stood near, for the intense bravery of the action was all significant.

Still nothing stopped the deadly fire of the marksmen.

Lady Mildred had now staggered to her feet, and stood by her husband's side. I saw her look at him and point upwards with her

"My God, Dale, isn't she a woman in a thousand? She is right, she is right! It shall be done."

"Take my handkerchief," I said, pulling it out of my pocket, "you can put it on your sword; any flag in an emergency like the present."

I felt as excited as the other two. I was completely carried out of myself. The next moment Capell had lifted his wife in his strong arms and rushed with her out of the hut. I saw him make straight for the open. Here the pair instantly became a target for the enemy. The bullets fell like hail—troops of Turkish infantry were all around. Capell stopped dead short, and held up the white flag on the point of his sword. At

hand. Once again he raised the arm which held the flag. His attitude was full of desperate resolve; he waved the small white flag in the air. What might have followed it is impossible to say. What did happen was this.

Just at that supreme moment the bullet for which Capell had been waiting so long found its mark. Without a word or a groan the brave fellow fell forward—he fell on his face, his arms stretched out wide. In an instant Lady Mildred stooped, and, snatching the sword and flag, held them aloft. Was she mad? Under such a deadly fire had she a chance of escape?

I was about to rush forward, when another shell burst a few feet away from the hut, tearing, as it did so, a portion of the roof off. The women and children were now in a frenzy of terror, and my work was cut out for me in trying to prevent them from rushing madly into the thick of the fray. I expostulated, I struggled, I kept them back by main force. I had just succeeded in bringing them once more into the hut, when all of a sudden I noticed a strange quiet. What did it mean? My heart beat high. Yes, the firing had completely ceased.

I struggled to the door of the hut, and when I did so I saw a strange sight. Not a hundred yards off a Turkish General was standing in earnest conversation with a Red Cross nurse. The woman held her hand to a wound in her chest; with the other hand she was still grasping Capell's sword.

Suddenly raising it she pointed to the hut, against the door of which the Greek women and children were clustering in wild terror—she then stooped and significantly touched the dead man with the point of the sword. The General was gazing hard at her. Troops of the enemy standing around were motionless. The next instant I saw the Turkish General

stoop. He lifted the dead soldier in his arms and walked quickly in the direction of the hut—the wife followed. When he reached the hut the General laid Capell reverently on the ground.

He then looked full at Lady Mildred, and the noble words which he uttered were spoken in her own tongue.

"For the sake of the brave dead your wish is law," he said. "These," he pointed to the wretched fugitives, "are from this moment under the protection of the Turkish army; there will be no more firing in the neighbourhood of this hut."

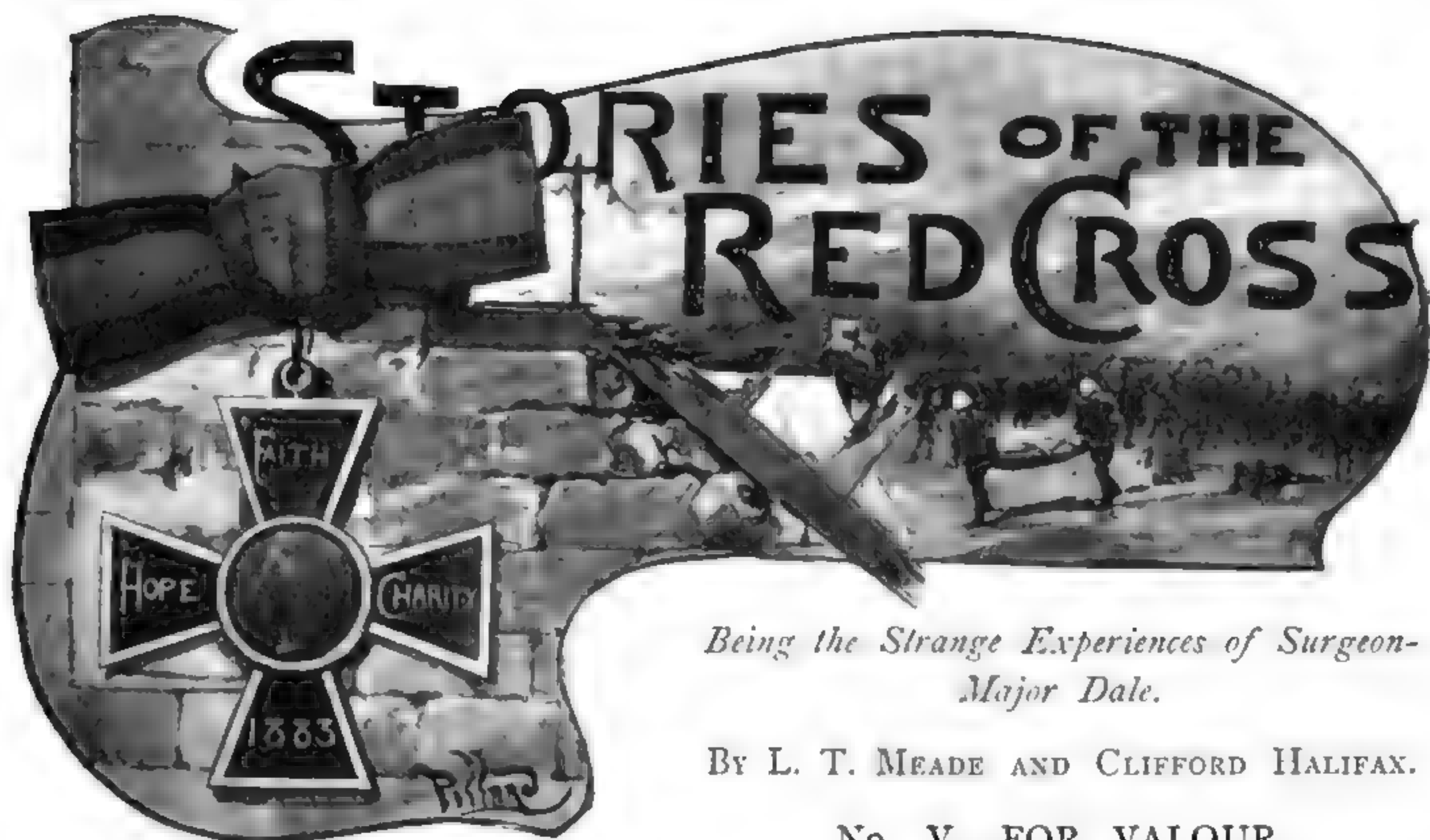
He disappeared from view, and Lady Mildred fell unconscious over the body of her husband.

Later on that same day we managed to convey the sick and wounded to a place of safety; and by-and-by after a sharp bout, the Red Cross nurse recovered, and is now back in England.

But Capell lies with the honour he so gallantly retrieved in his lonely grave beside Agrassa.



He lifted the dead soldier in his arms.



Being the Strange Experiences of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

No. V.—FOR VALOUR.

THAT most democratic and distinguished of all decorations, the Victoria Cross, given "For Valour" shown on the field of battle, does not in every case fall to the lot of the man who has earned it. On this roll of fame some grand names are omitted. The deed of heroism is done, but it leads to neither glory nor public recognition. I recall an instance of this sort which happened to a great friend of my own.

The story which I am about to tell happened a few years ago in a remote part of Upper Burmah. We were stationed at a place called Alipore, and our force was under the command of a very distinguished general officer, Sir Henry Redfern. In the regiment to which I was then attached Phil Luttrell happened to be the youngest captain. He was a regular boy in manners and appearance, and amused us, one and all, by his ways and doings. He was the most modest fellow I ever met, with a lot of cool pluck, and that sort of intellectual force and insight into character which invariably tells.

He had no fear, and when he set his heart on a thing he, as a rule, obtained it; but he was fond of keeping in the background, and, in consequence, did not always get the credit he deserved. He was a man with remarkable qualities, and was bound sooner or later to come to the front. But he was so jolly and bright that he was a universal favourite. He

took chaff well, and had a merry smile and a gay word for all.

The time was a time of danger, and brave men for the honour of their country held their lives but lightly. The natives were in a state of high disaffection, and we did not know from day to day what might take place.

Luttrell had been born in Burmah, and knew the country well. He was highly popular with the men of his company, and began in this difficult time to render good service by the indefatigable manner in which he kept them together. Our Governor-General expected any day to go to the front. In the meantime we waited, enduring the suspense as best we could. If our women and children were safe in England, we felt we should mind nothing else, but with the memory of the Mutiny in our hearts, we could not but tremble for the fate which might lie before them.

In the meantime the usual entertainments went on, for Alipore was a gay place. Wherever fun was, Luttrell was in the thick of it—waiting on the ladies, returning the idle chaff of his fellow officers, his laugh ringing out free and merry, and his eyes dancing with fun and fire. He was a good-looking chap, slightly above the average height, clean cut, lean, and active as a cat. His eyes were of a good bright hazel, and well open. They had a look in them which

I have sometimes seen in those of a trusty dog, but seldom in a human being. They were capable of great expression, and when he wanted to plead his cause most ably, he allowed his eyes to speak while his tongue remained silent.

Towards the end of the winter, and just when military affairs were most critical, General Redfern's only daughter appeared on the scene. Why she came to India at such a time I cannot say, but that is neither here nor there. The General had been excited about her before she came, talking of her to his most intimate friends, and expressing the highest satisfaction at her advent. It needed but a glance to show that she was as the apple of his eye, and when she arrived we little wondered that this should be the case.

She was a young and very fresh-looking girl, with a face full of tenderness, radiance, and beauty. I cannot recall now, often as I looked at her in those anxious days, whether she was dark or fair, or what colour her eyes were, but the moment you saw her, somehow or other you gave her your heart, and you could never think of another girl while she was by. Even the women were not jealous of sweet Dolly Redfern. They could not be, for she was so gently sympathetic and kind. In some ways she was like a creature apart—not a bit worldly in the ordinary

sense I mean, and yet she was the most human girl I ever met.

She did us all good. We liked to see her and to listen to her. We felt bravest of the brave when she was by, and less afraid of any direful consequences which might be near. To think that danger could possibly touch her was enough to nerve every man in the place to fight for her with all his

strength and courage. Yes, her advent did us good, although we often expressed our surprise at the General willingly bringing his only child into a scene of possible danger.

He was a queer man, and the most obstinate I have ever seen. In thinking over everything now, I am inclined to believe that he had a mad vein in him somewhere, and that Dolly brought it to the fore. It was plain to be seen that he was terribly ambitious for her. Before she came he was a bit of a martinet, and also a strict disciplinarian, but he was as just a man as you could find in the army. Now he became fretful and anxious, and even began to show most unsol-

dier-like jealousies. He talked about Dolly to some of his friends, and quite openly explained his views.

Dolly's mother had been the daughter of an earl, and Dolly herself, when peace was once more re-established, was to return to England and marry well. Her father would go with her and see to the whole thing. Dolly's husband must be a man of rank,



He tugged at his moustache, and began to walk up and down.

Wealth did not so greatly matter, but ~~rank~~ she must have at any cost. On one occasion the General said all these things to me, and as he did so I noticed to a marked degree the restless sparkle in his eyes and the unnecessary vehemence in his manner. He tugged at his moustache, and began to walk up and down.

"If any of you young fellows were to aspire to my daughter's hand, I could be cruel, Dale, I could be cruel," he reiterated.

"I don't believe it," I answered; but, as I spoke, my heart sank, for I glanced into his face, and was forced to see that his words bore the impress of truth.

"Dolly shall be a duchess before I die," he continued. "She has beauty and sweetness enough to win anybody. You'll see, Dale, if you live long enough, you'll see."

Now if these were Redfern's ideas for his daughter, Dolly's own views for herself were widely apart. A humble home lit up with love would abundantly content her—she wanted love and nothing else.

Meanwhile we one and all soothed the General and petted Dolly, and I for one trusted that no tragedy would occur.

This hope was soon destined to be shattered, for, of course, the likely thing happened, and Phil Luttrell—who had no rank of any sort, and was a mere nobody—fell over head and ears in love with the General's daughter. He took the complaint badly, and we scarcely knew him for a bit. Soon everyone in the place knew the state of affairs. Luttrell was in love with Dolly, and Dolly fully returned his affection. Now, indeed, General Redfern showed the rough side of his character. He was furious, stamped about like a veritable madman, and would not hear of an engagement. Luttrell asked him point-blank for Dolly, and got a point-blank refusal. The young man did not say a word, but in his own way he was as quietly determined as Sir Henry himself. Dolly also was heard to declare her intention of never giving in.

In the midst of this state of things—Dolly defiant, Phil furious and determined, the General scarcely on speaking terms with him—orders arrived from headquarters for the troops to march at once to Cholier, which was declared to be in a dangerous state of dis-

affection. Luttrell rushed into my quarters with the information.

"We are off to-night," he exclaimed; "isn't it glorious fun?"

I answered in the affirmative, for I was as glad of a chance of seeing a bit of real fighting as any other young fellow.

"I believe that my luck is in the ascendant," continued Luttrell, rubbing his hands; "the General will surely be satisfied if Dolly marries a man of mark. I intend to distinguish myself during this campaign."

I looked at him and smiled.

"I see what you are thinking about," he continued; "you believe that I am a conceited ass and all the rest, but I have simply made up my mind. Now that we are really off to Cholier, I have got just the chance I want. Cholier happens to be my native place; I understand not only the language, but the natives. One of their women was my ayah when I was a kid, and for the first five years of my life I grew up in their midst. I have never shaken off the old affections or the old ties, and I believe that I can use my knowledge and information now to the benefit of our force; you wait and see."

I looked into Phil's clever, serious face, and half believed him. His pluck was well known, and he was desperate. He wanted to win the girl he loved, and would go through fire and water on her behalf; but even without her, Phil was the sort of man to lay down at any moment his life for his Queen and Country. With a double motive, therefore, what might he not achieve?

We were to leave Alipore in the evening, and on the afternoon of that day I received a message from Sir Henry. He had been kind enough to take me up lately, and often sent for me to have a chat. I did not suppose that he wanted me for anything particular, but strolled across the compound to his house. I found him looking perturbed and anxious.

"Here you are, Dale!" he cried; "come in, won't you? The fact is this, I am awfully sorry that you are coming with us."

"Why so?" I asked. "I should be deeply disappointed if I did not join the expedition."

"Well, you are a clever doctor, and, of

course, will be useful, and there is a great deal of cholera about; still, if you remained at Alipore you could have looked after Dolly. I am not quite happy about her; she has no friends here, at least there are no women with whom I especially care to leave her; the cholera is near, and"—he paused, waiting for me to say something.

I made a commonplace rejoinder, something about the water Dolly was to drink and the usual precautions. He shook his head.

"Something ails her," he cried; "there is something worrying the child, and I don't like it, not a bit."

Now, of course, I knew very well what was worrying Dolly Redfern, but, glancing at the General, I saw that this was no time to remind him of the fact. He might have guessed my thoughts, for he looked restless and more anxious than ever.

"I did wrong to bring her out," he continued. "I ought to have left her in England for at least another year; but I was lonely without the child, and she wanted me; I saw it in her letters. The temptation was too much for me, but a motherless girl in Burmah just now is a facer. God knows what may happen here at any moment. Dolly's position is a horrible one, and it weighs on me. I have a presentiment that something bad will happen."

"Why don't you send her to England by the next boat?" I asked. "Surely you could get an escort to take her to the coast."

"No, no; and if I did she would not go. She is as staunch as God makes women, and that says a great deal. She has no fear in her—bless her. No, it is the thought of leaving her, and the trouble in her eyes; and, then, suppose she gets cholera, and there is no one here to look after her? I could almost find it in my heart to take her with me, but, of course, that is impossible. Dale, you have often wondered at me; I see it in your face."

"Well, you are a complex character," I answered.

"I am—I am; and where Dolly is concerned, as I have said already, I could be cruel. Of course, you have heard that Luttrell had the cheek to propose for her?"

"I do not see any cheek in it," I answered

stoutly. "Luttrell is as good a fellow as you could find in the service. He'll come to the front some day. He has a brave heart, and he loves Miss Redfern well."

The General stared at me, his face, which had been flushed, became almost purple, the pupils of his eyes were distended, his lower lip dropped. Before he could utter a word, however, the room door was softly opened, and Dolly came in. There was a change in the girl. Her face, which had been so fresh, looked already slightly worn; big black shadows accentuated the pathetic expression of her eyes. She looked very young, and sad.

The General gave her a glance, which showed me how he worshipped her; then he opened his arms, and folded her up in them.

"I wish you were back in England, little girl," he cried.

"Then I'm right glad I'm not, father," was the spirited reply. "It is dreadful to feel that you are going off and into danger, and—and all the others. If it were not for that"—she stopped abruptly, and to my astonishment, and to the General's discomfiture, burst into tears.

"Why, what is it, Dolly, my dear, what is it? Tell me what is troubling you?"

"It is this," answered Dolly stoutly. "I don't mind Dr. Dale knowing a bit. I cannot bear to part from Phil, father; I cannot bear it."

The General frowned. His tone, which had been full of compassion and tenderness, changed. He pushed Dolly from him.

"Don't let me hear you talk such folly," he cried.

She flushed up, and the tears dried on her cheeks.

"It is not folly, and you have no right to say it," she answered. "I love Phil better than anyone else in the wide world."

"I will not listen to any more of that sort of nonsense," cried the General. "You are little more than a child. You know nothing about such matters."

"But I do, father. See here, I have come to talk to you. You have a minute or two to spare, and Dr. Dale is present. I like Dr. Dale—I am very fond of him. He is Phil's

friend, and I don't mind his knowing everything. Now you must listen to me. No, I am not going to be afraid. I know you can be terribly, terribly angry. I know there are two sides to your nature. The noble, splendid side, and the side which—Oh, father, father, there is a part of you which could kill me! which could drag me into my grave! but I am sure the better side will conquer. Father, you must listen!"

I stared at Miss Redfern while she was speaking. I scarcely knew her. Hitherto I had thought her a very sweet, womanly girl, no stronger in any way than the majority of her sex, but now in her quiet, grave tones, in the confidence of her words, I read strength.

"I love Phil better than anyone else in the world," she repeated. "I shall never marry anybody else. I do not wish to disobey you, and I will not marry him without your leave, but I shall never marry another. He is going away to-night, he is going with you, and into danger. He may never come back again. I may never see him any more. I want to be engaged to him with your sanction and blessing, before he goes. Will you allow it?"

"Never!" cried General Redfern. "Dolly, you madden me. Am I the sort of man to give in to a girl's caprice, and so ruin her for life? No more on the subject, my dear. The fellow has the cheek of a—what is he?—a nobody."

"He will be somebody yet," answered Dolly, "and in any case he is the man I love; therefore he is somebody to me."

She took the General's hand; he tried to withdraw it.

"I thought perhaps you would refuse," she continued, still speaking in that very quiet, constrained voice, which somehow or other, made each word tell; "I had hoped you would say yes, but I thought it might be the other way, knowing you as I do,—yes,

knowing you as I do. You want me to marry some day, don't you?"

"Certainly, my love, but I have no time to talk on the matter now."

"But this is so important, father, and there is the chance that I may never see you again."



"I love Phil better than anyone else in the world."

The General winced, and his face turned pale.

"You want me to marry," continued Dolly, "and you would like me to marry a brave man and a distinguished man."

"Yes; that goes without saying."

"Then if Phil becomes distinguished—we all know that he is brave—if he wins the Victoria Cross, for instance, may I have him? I will not marry him without your leave unless he gets the Victoria Cross. That is a great distinction—a high honour. You will say yes to that. Father, you will, you must."

"You press me too hard, Dolly." The General fidgeted, and looked out of the window.

"I do not press you hard enough. I mean to go on begging and imploring until you yield. If Phil wins the Victoria Cross in this campaign, may I have him? If he gets it for valour on the field, or for any other noble and brave action, may I be his wife? Is it yes or no? If you say yes, I shall be well and happy, if no, then——" Her face turned white, the energy suddenly left her little figure, her head drooped as though she were a withered flower.

"You had better yield, sir," I cried suddenly. "Miss Redfern's proposition is a most reasonable one. If Luttrell should win the Victoria Cross, he is certain to come to the front; his family is good, he is not without private means, you could have no possible objection to the match, and they love each other. There is a great deal of cholera about," I continued, as if it were an afterthought, "and a depressed state of the nervous system——"

"What do you mean, Dale?"

"A depressed state of the nervous system lays a person dangerously open to contracting the disease."

"Is your mind unalterably set on this, Dolly?" inquired her father.

"It is, father. The thought of the coming separation nearly kills me; but if I have your word, I shall rest."

"Then, listen. I yield on a condition. It is this—that you do not see Luttrell before he goes."

Dolly started. The General went on inflexibly:

"You do not see Luttrell again; and if he does *not* win the Victoria Cross in this campaign, you give him up."

"Oh, you are cruel!"

"I yield on no other terms."

"Then I submit—I must."

"That is good. He won't get the Victoria Cross—not a chance of it, but if he does, I also keep my part of the bargain. Now, leave me, for I am busy."

That evening the ladies of the different regiments saw us off. Dolly was amongst the number. She held her head like a queen, and when we moved off to danger, glory, or death, she, with the others, accompanied us to the end of the valley. I looked back

twice, and each time saw her smiling face. It was white as death, but she was waving her hand, and kept on smiling. I thought I had never seen a fairer nor a more stimulating sight.

Luttrell was far away from her in command of his own men, but the young pair managed to throw glances of fire from one to the other which no one could intercept, and Phil's feet stepped lightly over the ground as we marched off, and were lost to view.

Some days later we reached Cholier. Cholera had already broken out in our midst and our anxieties were great. Cholier was in a high state of disaffection, but the arrival of our force had an immediate and salutary effect, and the General had not much trouble in taking possession of the outskirts of the town. The great palace in the centre, however, had yet to be won before the place could really be considered ours.

During these anxious days I saw very little of Luttrell, but his brother officers were loud in their praise of him, and often brought me stories of his unselfishness, zeal, and pluck. I longed to whisper a certain word in his ears, but it seemed to me that honour forbade, and after all he was plucky enough to do what Dolly expected of him without knowing how grave was the issue which hung upon his valour. The time was near when he was to be put to the test.

After a most gallant fight we forced our way into the centre of Cholier, and the enemy were obliged to retire into the adjacent hills. By 3 p.m. on this eventful day the whole of this block of hills was cleared of the enemy, and was also in our possession. Guns were captured, but the enemy still kept up a heavy fire on us from two guns on the parade, from the fort, and from the palace which occupied the heart of the town.

I shall never forget the keen excitement. The heat was the most intense I had ever experienced, and with the heavy firing our men were falling on all sides. By four o'clock that day we had practically taken the town, and had come up in front of the palace. Its courtyard and buildings were occupied by a large number of armed men, whose inten-



With the heavy firing our men were falling on all sides.

tions were evidently war to the death. Having taken the outposts, the moment had arrived when we must storm the citadel.

This was no easy task ; our loss would doubtless be considerable, and it would be extremely difficult to dislodge the enemy. The terraced roofs of the palace were screened by a parapet ; thus our foes were sheltered, and could fire on us without mercy. The place was held, too, by desperadoes, who would fight to the last breath. The palace of Cholier was not only strongly fortified, but was full of treasure, the destruction of which could never be replaced.

If we were lucky enough to save this magnificent building, we should obtain the goodwill of the Tsawbwa, who was now absent, and in all probability the disaffection, which might spread at any moment through the length and breadth of Burmah, would be summarily put an end to. If, on the other hand, the palace was battered by our guns, it would be war to the knife.

By orders of Sir Henry Redfern, our force was formed for an advance, and, although we had ceased firing at that moment, at any instant the bombardment of the palace might begin. While we all waited in suspense, I saw Luttrell put spurs to his horse and ride

forward. He came up to the place where the General had paused to give final directions. I happened to be within ear-shot, and heard what he said.

"If you will allow me, Sir Henry," he cried, "I will volunteer to ride forward alone and endeavour to obtain the surrender of the palace to the British force without bloodshed."

I saw the General's eyes flash with sudden fire. Just for a moment a look of strong admiration filled them ; then they darkened, and I saw him give the young fellow a contemptuous glance from head to foot.

"What do you mean ?" he said briefly.

"What I say," replied Luttrell. "It is most important that the palace should be saved for the Tsawbwa, and that heavy loss of life should be averted. It is possible to save the place by diplomacy without a shot being fired. If you will give me permission I am willing to make the attempt. At the worst I can but fail ; but I was born in Cholier and know the place. I also understand Burmese. May I take the risk ?"

Some men who were standing near raised a shout of approval, for the offer was in truth a most gallant one, and Luttrell's face spoke volumes. My heart almost stopped beating

as I listened for the General's reply. Just for a moment his brow fell, and his eyes sought the ground; then he nodded his head in token of assent. The order was immediately given to the column to halt, and Captain Luttrell rode up to the gateway which formed the entrance to the courtyard of the palace.

The moment he did so muskets were levelled at him from every quarter, but, wonder of wonders, no one fired. It was easy to see from the post where we remained that the men inside the palace were in the wildest confusion. I felt certain that they were determined at all risks to fight our troops.

There was no gate, but the ingress through the gateway was barred to a horseman by a beam of wood which was fixed to a socket in the wall at either side, and for some minutes Luttrell's life was in the gravest peril. The confusion inside made it impossible for his voice to be heard, but he could be plainly seen, and muskets from every quarter were levelled against him. Suddenly a lithe Mussulman started up; he was standing near the gateway. He glanced at Luttrell, and then uttered a shout. We heard his words from where we stood.

"It is Luttrell sahib," he cried. "Luttrell sahib speaks the truth; let him in."

Immediately three or four men rushed forward, the barrier to the gateway was removed, and Luttrell dashed into the courtyard and was lost to view. Then there followed a heavy silence. Would the brave fellow ever come out again alive? For an act of cool daring I had seldom seen anything to equal what he had just done. Many a man in the heat of excitement will go up to the cannon's mouth, but there was nothing here to excite or stimulate him but his own sense of the importance of the duty he had volunteered to perform.

Half-an-hour passed, the armed men in the palace were silent, the troops outside remained motionless. Suddenly, to our intense delight, Luttrell reappeared. He dashed up immediately to Sir Henry's side, and spoke eagerly.

"It is all right," he cried. "I told the Chief that I would guarantee that all lives in

the palace would be saved if they would obey orders, but there must be no delay, as the British force was prepared and eager to attack them."

"Well?" said the General briefly.

"At first he refused to give in, and told me that they would hold the place for the Tsawbwa, and would only give it up to him on his coming; but that nothing would induce them to surrender it to the English. In that case I assured them that the place would be stormed, and that not a man would escape. They saw that I was determined, held another consultation, and finally said: 'We will do what you order.'"

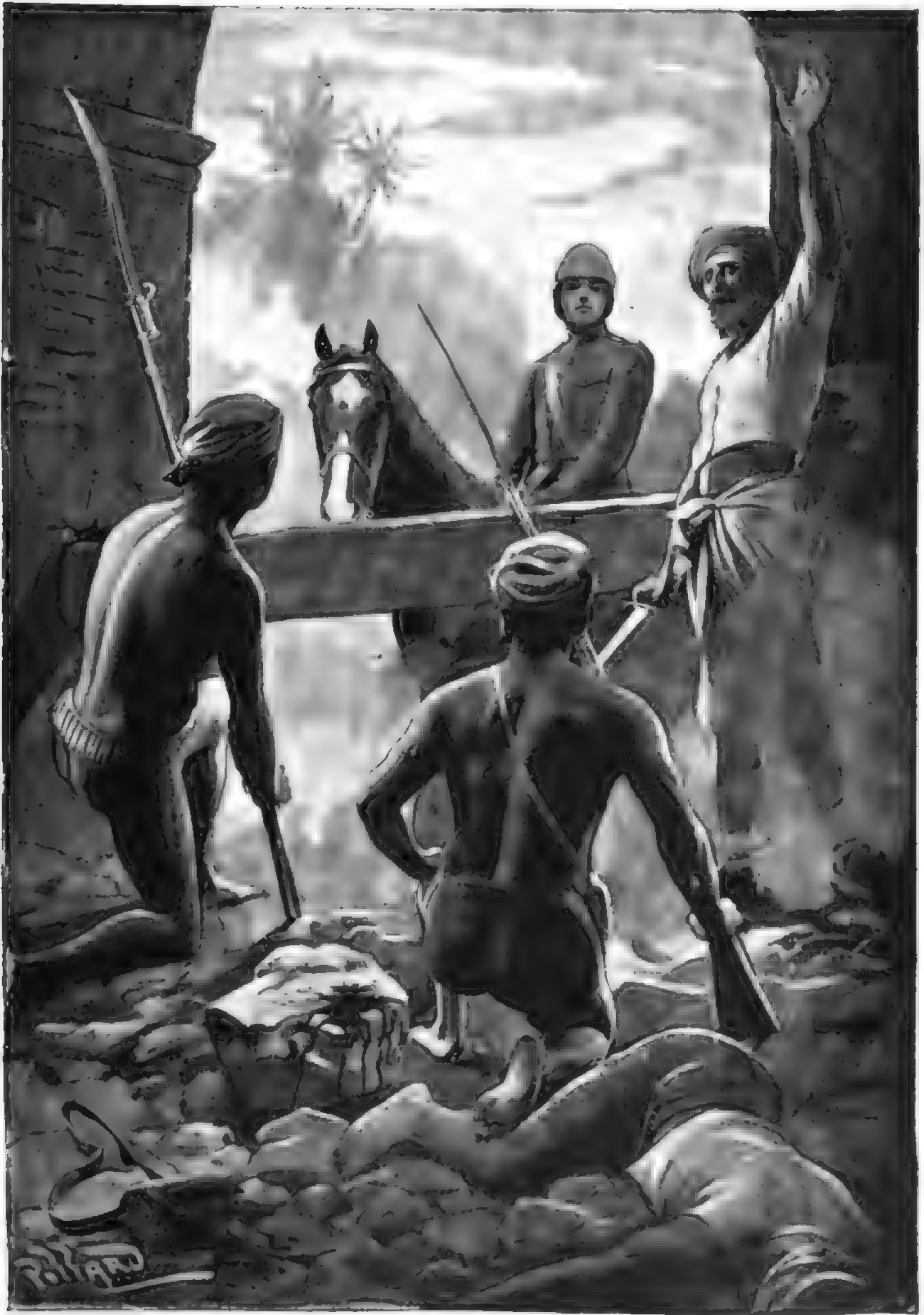
"Good," said the General; his mouth twitched. I gave him a keen glance. I wondered if at that supreme moment he remembered Dolly, and the promise she had wrung from him. Luttrell continued to speak with a ring in his voice.

"There was still great danger, for if one of our troops, by the merest chance, fired, it would be all up, as the fire would be immediately returned, and the word of the chief would go for nothing.

"In order, therefore, to avoid such a risk, I directed every man to get at once inside the building, and to remain there perfectly quiet until they had directions to leave, or orders were issued by you, sir, for their disposal. The Chief grumbled at this, but in the end he yielded, and now the removal of the armed men from the outside of the palace has been effected. The Chief and his fellow leaders are responsible for the conduct of their men, and for the preservation of the interior of the palace building, and I have come to ask you, General Redfern, to send a party of our men immediately, to post for the security of the palace."

"I will do so," answered the General. "Luttrell, I thank you; you have behaved with splendid bravery, courage, and tact."

General Redfern's words were heard by all the men who stood round. Luttrell's face, which had been flushed and animated, grew pale from intense emotion; he bowed his head and turned aside. The next moment the General had given the necessary orders, a couple of companies immediately went forward to the palace, Luttrell going with them.



"It is Luttrell sahib," he cried.

In this way the Tswabwa's palace was taken by the British force without a single shot being fired, or a drop of blood shed. Luttrell had won the victory.

I can scarcely speak of the excitement and rejoicing which ensued. I felt in my heart of hearts that all was now well. Luttrell would be recommended for the Victoria Cross which he had so nobly earned, and the General would keep his word to Dolly.

"You had cool daring," said a Major in our own regiment, who came up to the young fellow to congratulate him. "If Sir Henry does you the justice you deserve, you will not only win the Cross, but get the rank of Major."

"Luttrell, your action was simply a brilliant one," said his Colonel later that day.

To these remarks Luttrell answered very little. He was never a fellow to brag; as I said before, he was as modest as he was plucky. We all wondered what mention would be made of him in the dispatch which Sir Henry would send home within the next few days. The Victoria Cross was, at least, a foregone conclusion.

Weeks and even months passed by. Cholier was ours, the moment of peril had been safely tided over—the insurgents had seen the folly of their ways, and all was once more peace. Some of Sir Henry Redfern's force had already been distributed to other parts of the country, but the regiment to which I was attached was still at Cholier.

One day news like an electric shock ran through the place. The English mail had arrived. Sir Henry Redfern's dispatch home had been copied from the London Gazette into the daily papers. These papers had reached us. The dispatch gave a gallant and spirited account of our short campaign, but there was no mention whatever of Luttrell's name.

It was Luttrell himself who came to tell me.

"I knew the General would do for me," he cried. "I always felt he would, but I did

not think he was quite base enough for this."

My indignation was so great that I had scarcely words to reply.

He flung some English papers on my table.

"Never mind that now," he continued. "After all it is not on this subject, important as it is, that I have come to speak to you.

I have heard

from Alipore, and have had very anxious news about Dolly. She has been failing for some time. I feel queerly nervous about her. If anything happens, I believe I shall shoot myself."

"No, you are far too manly for that," I answered. "Now look here, Phil, things are past bearing, and I shall interfere. I am going off this very minute to interview the General. If he knew of Miss Redfern's illness, I am certain he would do something. The fact is she is fretting for you, Luttrell. Hers is a warm heart, and love and separation are too mighty for it."



There was no mention whatever of Luttrell's name.

"I shall do my best to get leave of absence and go back to her," said Luttrell. "But there," he added passionately, "I am hemmed in on all sides; the General has it in his power to prevent me, and he hates me."

I did not dare to tell him what I knew. It was all too plain that General Redfern had been base enough to omit Luttrell's name from the dispatch because of his promise to Dolly.

I was just about to speak when an orderly came hastily to my quarters. He brought a note with him—it was from General Redfern, asking me to go to him at once. I hurried off in some wonder. When I arrived at the General's house I found everyone in the greatest consternation. Small wonder! It needed but a glance to show me that Sir Henry had been seized by cholera in its most acute form, and that his life was in danger. A cruel and more terrible foe than shot and shell had him in its grip.

I watched by him all night doing what I could to relieve his agonies, but the poison was so virulent that his strength was immediately undermined, and he lay prostrate, scarcely fighting for the life which was so rapidly ebbing away. Towards morning his sufferings became less, and he called me to his side.

"Mine is a bad case, is it not?" he asked.

"It is," I replied; but then I added: "We must hope for the best—keep up your courage."

He did not speak but closed his eyes, a frown knitting his brows. Grave collapse had begun to set in. The temperature of the body fell, the surface became cold and clammy. As I looked at it I could scarcely recognise Sir Henry's face. The features were drawn, the eyes sunken; the expression denoted terrible anxiety. It needed no second glance to assure me that he was dying. His muscular power was already diminished, but as yet his intelligence was unclouded.

"I want to say something to you, Dale," he whispered hoarsely.

"Anything," I replied.

"You are sure that it is all up with me?"

I made no answer.

"Come, doctor, don't hesitate. I am not

afraid. Death comes once to all men. You believe that I am about to die?"

I nodded my head.

"It is harder to go coldly and silently like this than in the heat of battle," he continued, "but all men go once, and this is my hour. Now I want to say something. It is this—I die as I lived."

"Most men do, sir," I replied. "I do not believe in deathbed repentances or anything of that sort. Besides, you have not"—I paused; the memory of what Luttrell had just told me swept over my brain.

"Oh, yes, I have something to repent of," he interrupted me quickly. "It would now be in the correct order of things for me to make restitution, and to—"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"What I say. Twenty-four hours ago I was in the full possession of my faculties. I had then absolutely made up my mind that Luttrell should never marry Dolly. I am still of the same way of thinking. He shall not have her."

"But your promise," I cried. "General Redfern, he has done the deed of valour, and by all that is just in heaven above or in earth beneath, the Victoria Cross is his."

"Stoop down, Dale," said the dying man. His voice grew more hoarse. I could barely distinguish the words. "Luttrell will never get his V.C."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I willed it so. My dispatch has already been received and published. *I have, on purpose, omitted all mention of his name!*"

"Good God!" I cried. "You cannot mean what you are saying, Sir Henry?"

"I have done it, Dale—I have done it."

"On account of Dolly?" I asked.

"No matter why—it is done."

"Then, do you know what you really are?"

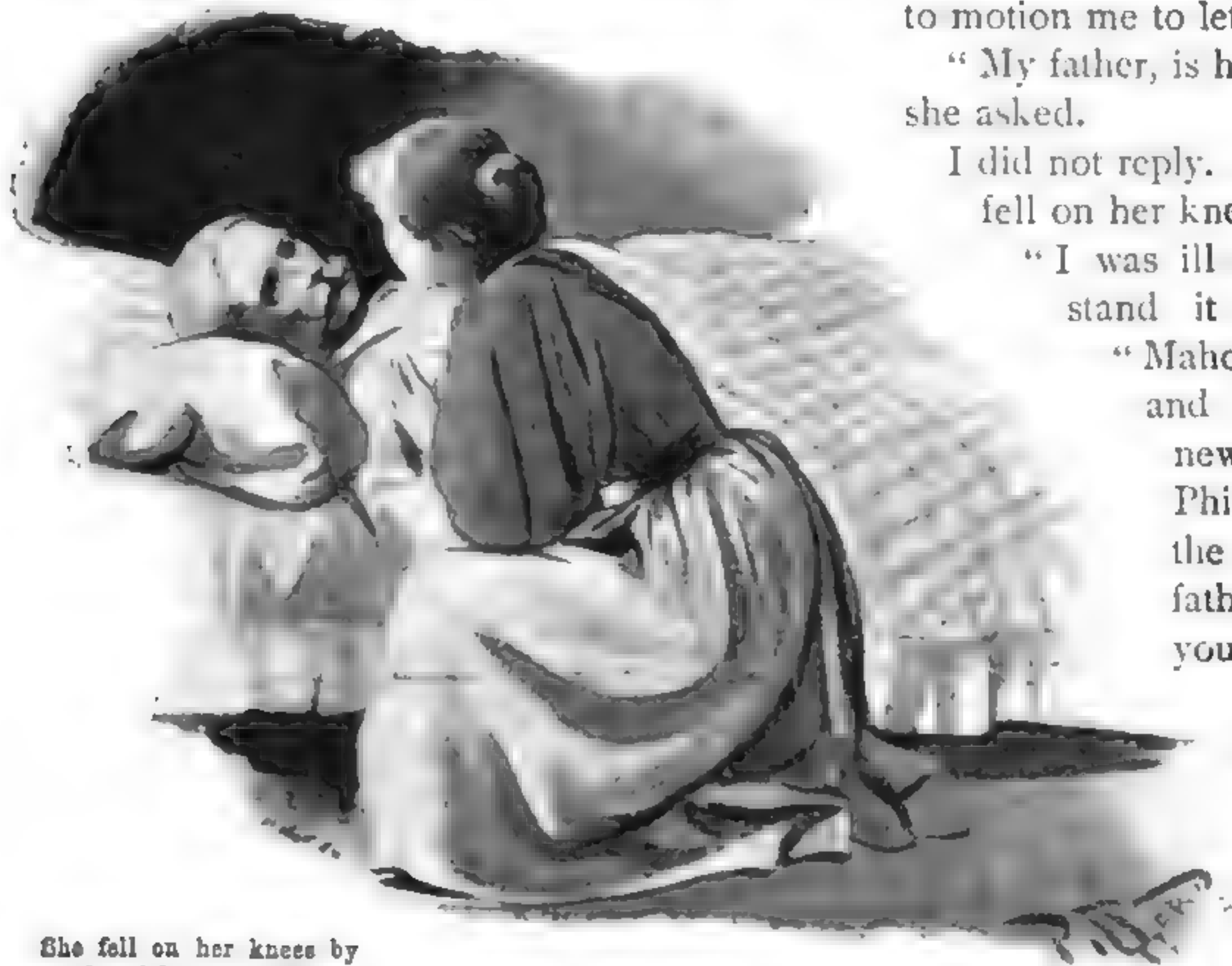
"Quite well," he said steadily. "A black-guard, and worse; but as compared to Dolly's future, my own character goes for nothing. She was to marry him, with my consent, if he got the Victoria Cross. He does not get it, and whether I am alive or dead, she cannot in honour become his wife."

"But this is fearful," I said. "Even now, you can repair the mischief you have done."

For Heaven's sake, General Redfern, don't go to your Maker with this sin on your soul."

"He shall not marry Dolly, nor get the insignia due to valour. I die as I lived. I always said that on this point I could be cruel."

"My God, you are!" I answered. I could scarcely speak. The attitude of the man whose moments were numbered utterly appalled me. It was with difficulty I could attend to my medical duties. But still graver symptoms of the fell disease aroused me. The pulse flagged, and the intelligence, hitherto so bright, became clouded. Sensibility and even capacity of movement were



She fell on her knees by the sick man's side.

almost gone. I felt that all was hopeless, and was debating in my own mind what possible steps I could take when like a flash an idea occurred to me.

"General Redfern," I said, bending over him, and speaking in a loud, clear voice, "can you attend to me for a moment?"

The sunken eyes were opened and fixed on my face.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Have you heard lately from your daughter?"

Even at the brink of the grave these words troubled him. He started up and said excitedly:

"I have not heard for some weeks. I cannot account for the silence."

"But I can," I answered. "Miss Redfern does not write because she is ill."

"What, ill? Dolly?" he said. Strength came back to his eyes and voice, his pulse beat rapidly. Just at that supreme moment I heard someone speak in the outer room. A voice clear as a bell sounded in my ears.

"By Heaven, Dolly herself!" I cried under my breath. "Dolly in Cholier—how in the name of fortune did she get here, and now?"

I rushed from the room to confront her on the threshold. Her sweet face was full of anxiety and fear. She stretched out her hand to motion me to let her pass.

"My father, is he as bad as they tell me?" she asked.

I did not reply. She hurried forward and fell on her knees by the sick man's side.

"I was ill and miserable, and could stand it no longer," she began.

"Mahomet Khan came with me, and I am here. I heard the news, of course, and what Phil had done. He has won the Victoria Cross. Dear father, you will now fulfil your promise."

No other voice would have roused the dying man, but Dolly's did. He looked at her attentively.

"Phil has won the Victoria Cross," she

repeated. "You have recommended him, of course; you have spoken of him in your dispatch. He will get it."

"Did you hear anything more?" he asked in a strange, low whisper.

"Nothing; nothing except what he has done and the bravery of the action. All Burmah rings with it. You will now fulfil your promise."

The General looked at her with knitted brows. There was a very perceptible change in her face; she looked worn and ill, the eyes were far too bright and anxious for health.

"You have been suffering?" he said briefly.

"Yes; but that is nothing. Phil has won the Victoria Cross, and you will fulfil your promise."

The General continued to gaze into her changed face. "Leave me for a moment," he said abruptly.

I motioned to her to go from the room. The moment she did so Sir Henry Redfern turned to me.

"Is my daughter in danger?" he asked.

"Yes, but happiness will save her," I replied.

"Then I yield; she shall be saved. Is it possible to hide the truth from her about the dispatch?"

"Luttrell will never tell her."

"Send him to me immediately."

I rushed from the room. No need to ask me to put wings to my feet. I hurried across the compound, and was lucky enough to find Luttrell in his own quarters.

"Come back at once," I said, "Dolly is here—how she managed to get to Cholier Heaven only knows. The General is dying; he has but a few moments to live; you are wanted. Be brave, Luttrell, and, as you are a man, forgive as you hope to be forgiven."

"Oh, I'll do that; I only want Dolly," was the answer.

"But a grave and terrible wrong has been done you, my boy."

"No matter, I only want Dolly," was the reply.

We both entered the sick room. The General was alive, but little more. Dolly knelt by the bed, holding his hand. Luttrell crossed the room and bent over the old man.

"I am sorry to see you so bad, sir," was his remark.

"Ah, yes; I am going, Luttrell. I did you an injustice and I—*don't* repent. Were I to live I should stick to it. As it is, I beseech of you to respect my memory to my child, and be her protector, if you will."

"With all my heart."

"Then go both of you. Dale, ask them to leave me."

They went out of the room.

"I had a hard fight to give in even now," whispered the old General; "but see, Dale, see that she never knows the truth about that dispatch." The grip of death was at his throat as he spoke.

* * * * *

Dolly lives, and is happy; but Luttrell's name has never been added to the roll of the Victoria Cross heroes. His wife thinks that bitter injustice has been done him by those in the highest authority. She will never guess the real reason.



"I had a hard fight to give in even now," whispered the old General.



Being the Strange Experiences of Surgeon-Major Dale.

BY L. T. MEADE AND CLIFFORD HALIFAX.

No. VI.—THE DRUMMER BOY.

THERE was a rising in the clans and we were all anxious. Our garrison at Makdara consisted of about three thousand men, while two hundred infantry and fifty cavalry held the fort, guarding the bridge across the Makbal River. I was ordered to join the latter party. Colonel Burton was in command.

The tribesmen were in the highest state of disaffection, being led on by one of their fakirs. We thought it likely that the suspension bridge over the Makbal River would be wrecked, and our telegraph wires cut at an early date. Some days passed, however, and there was only desultory fighting, as the enemy, although numerous, were badly armed. We were hoping that matters would quiet down and that the rising would not be general, when late one evening the news was brought to us that the wires were cut. We then knew that it meant war to the knife.

Shortly after the news came in I went over to Captain Winton's quarters. He was a young infantry officer who had joined the regiment to which I then belonged two years ago. From the first I had taken a special interest in him. He was a very reserved fellow, rigid in his demeanour, and somewhat overbearing with his company, but I knew him to be as plucky a soldier as ever held Her Majesty's Commission, and on this account alone he won respect from every quarter. He and I had been discussing the

aspect of affairs not an hour before the news with regard to the wires reached us. I went to his room now in order to acquaint him with the fact that our suspicions were confirmed.

I knocked at his door but received no answer. I knocked again—there was a faint noise scarcely discernible. Thinking that he must have called out to me to enter, I opened the door and looked in. The sight which met my eyes filled me with dismay and astonishment. Winton was seated near a small writing-table with his coat open, his shirt unfastened, and in the extreme of agony. His face was white, with heavy blue lines round the eyes and mouth—he could neither speak nor stir, but his eyes motioned me to come forward and help him. The attack looked like one of angina pectoris, and I rushed off to my own quarters to get him the necessary remedies. When I came back he was slightly better.

I examined his heart, but could not find anything to account for the extremity of the paroxysm. Winton said that he had suffered from similar attacks at intervals during the last two years, and believed that they were due to a nervous affection. I prescribed some medicine, and hesitated to tell him the news with which I had been brimful when I entered the room.

"Is anything up?" he asked, raising his eyes to my face.



Winton was seated near a small writing-table.

"Don't bother now; go to bed and have a good sleep," I said.

"You had better tell me, Dale," was the quiet answer. "I shall not have another attack for the present. Have the brutes cut the wires?"

"Yes, not an hour back."

"Then we cannot communicate with Makdara?"

"No."

"And are in for serious fighting?"

"We are. This will give the tribes confidence, and a general attack on the fort is certain to take place."

An eager light came into Winton's eyes. He looked straight ahead of him.

"I am glad I am in the thick of it," he said after a pause. "Nothing will suit me better."

"You want your V.C., eh?" I queried.

"No."

"What then?"

"The right bullet in the right place," was the reply.

I started impatiently to my feet.

"I should not have thought it of you," I cried. "So you fear a repetition of the pain I have seen you suffering—you fear it so much that you want to get quit of it."

"You are altogether mistaken. The pain is bearable, but life is not. If I have the luck to die fighting I shall have accomplished the end of my existence and not unworthily."

"Now what has come to you young fellows?" I exclaimed with irritation. "Is not an honourable life worth fifty honourable deaths?"

He looked at me steadily. I seated myself.

"Look here," I continued, "there is something the matter with you. I have seen it for some time; you had better make a clean breast of it. It will relieve you to give me your

confidence. I have had all kinds of confidences in my day. What is up with you, my boy?"

He did not reply at once. His face grew hard and stern—then suddenly it softened.

"You are a queer fellow, Dale," he said. "Just now when we are in the thick of danger it seems a queer thing to talk of one's own private affairs, but here goes; it would be a relief to unburden myself."

"One's own special sorrows stick to one however the rest of the world wags," I answered sagely. "Now speak, and be quick about it, for I want to get you safely into bed."

"It is the old story," he answered. "I have played the dickens with a woman's life and wrecked my own."

I made no reply. He unfastened a piece of ribbon from his neck and pulled out a morocco case.

"This is her photograph," he said, putting the case into my hands. "Her name was Valencia Ogilvie. A couple of years back we were engaged. For three months we looked forward to our marriage as a matter of course. Then she fell ill and I was ordered off here. She is now the wife of Colonel Pirbright of the —— Fusiliers."

"What!" I exclaimed, "the colonel of your old regiment?"

"The same," he answered.

He leant back in his chair. He had a strong mouth, which rarely smiled. Now his lips were tightly shut. I saw that he was keeping himself in, and with an effort. I looked at the photograph. It had been taken by an artist who knew how to pose his subject, and was not only a photograph, but a picture. The face was a remarkable one, not so much for the beauty of the features as for the expression, which was intelligent, sweet, and brave to a remarkable degree. Round the mouth were some patient lines, which in so young a face gave it a queer pathos. The eyes were good, wide open, and set far apart. I closed the case, and returned it to Winton. He laid it on the table.

"Valencia married Pirbright," he continued, speaking slowly, "against her will. Her father was a scoundrel. He wanted money, and Pirbright was rich. He never wished her to marry me, and when I left England raked up stories to my discredit. Some of them were true, but the greater number false. It is a fact that I did go to the dogs for a bit, for a report reached me in Bombay that Valencia was engaged to Pirbright. I was mad enough to believe it, and acted for a time like a young fiend. Then I had a letter from her telling me she would be true to me, and begging of me to contradict the stories which gave her father a handle against me, and which she never for a moment believed herself. I wrote straight home, not only to her, but to her father. I told the simple truth. The very next thing I heard Valencia had married Pirbright."

"And then?" I said.

Winton rose; he had forgotten the agony he had just lived through, his whole face glowed with passion.

"Can't you guess what this meant to me, Dale?" he continued. "By the cruellest irony of fate Pirbright was my Colonel. I had just been appointed to the —— Fusiliers. Valencia and I met three months after her marriage in Calcutta. One day we were alone, and she told me her story. Her father had kept back the letter which I wrote to her, and had doctored the one I sent to him. She read, as she thought, in my own handwriting, confirmation of my evil ways. In a moment of despair the unhappy girl consented to marry Pirbright. She had not been his wife a week before the awful truth was borne in upon her that she had married a drunkard and a dissipated man."

"No!" I cried.

"The truth, Dale, as there is a heaven above us. In one sense her news was scarcely news to me, for we all more or less knew his character in the regiment. In a bluff sort of way he could make himself agreeable enough when he was sober, but no one really liked him, and the men one and all hated him. Well, there was this girl, delicate, highly strung, chained to the brute for life. My blood ran cold as I listened to the things she told me. Not that she said much, but I guessed what was too bad to tell. You must try to realise that I loved her; she was all that I lived for. I knew I should never care for another woman."

"After that first meeting we often contrived to see each other. She was proud and kept her sufferings to herself, but her face grew thin and worn, and that queer look came round her mouth which you must have noticed in the photograph."

I nodded without speaking.

"People began to talk about her and the Colonel," continued Winton slowly. "They often mentioned her name in my hearing, and things were said about her husband which I could not help listening to, although I dared not sympathise. My hope was that no breath of scandal would touch her. The women all liked her. They pitied her. Who could help it? But they never connected her name with mine, which was the ghost of a relief."

"At last, one night, the crisis came. There was a ball at Government House, and Valencia and I found ourselves alone in the gardens. I saw by her manner that she had been going through worse suffering than usual, and asked her point blank what was up. At first she refused to speak, but at last I got the truth from her. The brute had threatened her life. She showed me a cut on her arm, inflicted with a glass, which he flung at her. My blood was up, and I did not know what I was saying. I begged of her then and there to throw her reputation to the winds, and run off with me. When I made the suggestion, she trembled, and I thought she was going to yield.

" 'You tempt me,' she said bitterly. She covered her face, and turned away from me.

"Having broken the ice, the devil took possession of me, and I did all that man could to persuade her. I offered to leave the army, and said we might lead a happy life, forgotten by the world. I used all the worn out arguments in favour of the mad course which seemed to me just then the only thing to be done.

" 'You tempt me,' she repeated. The tears ran down her cheeks. She moved away from me.

" 'You shall have my decision to-morrow,' she said, and then she left me.

"The next day I heard from her. It was the one and only letter I ever received from her since she became Pirbright's wife. In this she told me that she had thought everything over, that the mad moment of temptation was past, and she would never do what I asked.

" 'I write quite frankly,' she said, 'for I love you. I do not love my husband, but, just because I love you, I will not drive you to your ruin. This kind of thing never succeeded, and it never will, and I won't be the one to do it. I will endure the life I have undertaken as long as God gives me strength, but I won't do the other thing.'

"She wound up her letter, Dale, with words which a man can never forget. She said something about a soldier's honour, and so living that I should meet death when it came without fear. She said, too, emphatically, that danger and suffering are worth

going through to keep one's honour. I cannot exactly tell you how she put it, but it got into my heart and gave me strength. I felt that I would gladly die fifty deaths to live up to her standard. All that happened over two years ago. I took immediate steps to exchange into my present regiment, and you know the rest."

"Have you heard nothing of Mrs. Pirbright in the interim?" I asked.

"Nothing. If she were dead the news would reach me. I believe she is alive, and I also believe she is holding her own. Now, don't ask me any more. You understand, perhaps, now why I am the glum, reserved sort of fellow you see me. All my interest in life is narrowed to a single line. I want to show Valencia some day that I tried to do my duty."

I said a few consolatory words, assured Winton of my sympathy, and, urging him to go to bed and rest, soon afterwards left him.

The next day the enemy showed in strength on the hills. A strong picket of our infantry were stationed at a sarai, and Winton with his company was sent forward to reconnoitre. I went with him. We were nearly a mile from the fort when I saw him suddenly press his hand to his heart and fall forward. I dashed up at once to his rescue. The Sikhs were being fiercely assailed at the moment, and had hard work to keep their ground. I managed to place Winton in a dooly, and with a small party of Sikhs attempted to return to the fort. Darkness was already setting in, but after going a few steps we found ourselves surrounded by the enemy. The Sikhs bravely clung to the dooly until three were killed and a fourth wounded. There was no help for it then. In order to rescue Winton I must lift him out, and carry him home on my back. Just for a moment, like a flash, I thought of the story he had told me the day before. I remembered a woman with dark eyes and a patient mouth, who had said brave words to this man. For the sake of that woman he should not die if I could help it. I took him from the dooly, put him on my back, and rushed forward.

Our little party kept diminishing in numbers as we were fired on the whole way. We

were obliged to charge walls, from behind which the enemy kept up a constant firing, and just before we reached the fort were in imminent danger of being cut up, as we were completely surrounded. There was nothing for it but to rush the position. This I managed to do, and, although all our little party were more or less wounded, we succeeded in getting Winton into the fort. I have seen danger in my time, but I had never before been so close to the mouth of the pit.

When I found myself within shelter, I had a confused sort of idea that I should be recommended for a V.C., but a nasty wound in my shoulder caused me to faint off, and the last thing I was conscious of was Winton's white face peering into mine. I recovered quickly. Surgeon-Major Collis came up, and attended to me. I immediately inquired for Winton.

"He is in a bad way. I doubt if he will pull through," was the reply.

"I must see him," I exclaimed. "Where have they taken him?"

"Into the hospital."

"I must get to him," I repeated.

"As you please, Dale," answered Collis.

"I know your way, but try to remember that you are hurt yourself. If you do not give that shoulder rest, things will go badly with you."

I found Winton lying on his back. His collar bone was broken and two ribs fractured, but the principal seat of the mischief was in the left lung. Here a bullet was lodged, hæmoptysis was incessant, and pneumonia was certain to supervene. I bent over him, and he looked up at me. Then he said in a low voice:

"Has the right bullet found me?"

"Not a bit of it," I replied; "but, now, see here, Winton, you must not talk. As your doctor, I forbid it. If you remain quiet, we shall pull you through."

He motioned with one of his hands.

"If I do not get better, Dale," he said, speaking with extreme difficulty, "you will—tell her."

"Leave that to me," I said with enthusiasm. "I will describe to her fast enough how a brave soldier came by his end."

"And how the best man of his day tried to rescue him at extreme peril," was the quiet reply. "Do not leave that part out, Dale."

"Never mind about me," I said. "I mean to pull you through—you won't die. I have a presentiment—not that I am much given to that sort of thing, but I have a pre-



I put him on my back, and rushed forward.

sentiment—that you will see your way out of your trouble, Winton. Now stay quiet."

He said nothing more, but closed his eyes. I saw that his was going to be a bad case. We had few medical necessities in the fort, and the ordinary comforts of the sick room were conspicuous by their absence. Winton's was a case which required constant and careful nursing. Although I was stiff and sore, and my shoulder ached persistently, I resolved to sit up with him. That first night he was very restless, his temperature high, his pulse shaky, his respiration laboured. There was consolidation of a large portion of lung, and on the arrest of this and its ultimate clearing, of course depended his recovery. Towards

morning I suddenly remembered that Surgeon-Major Collis had the Röntgen Ray apparatus with him.

"Good!" I cried under my breath. "If we can only take a skiagraph, we may be able to find out where the bullet is embedded."

I hurried off to Collis's room at dawn, and told him briefly what I had come about.

"Though there is considerable hæmoptysis," I said, "it is evident that no vessel of any size has been ruptured by the transit of the bullet. I am inclined to think that it has skirted the lung, and lies in the pleural cavity. I have seen this before in the case of round shot. My reason for thinking so is that there is pain and rubbing over the opposite side of the thorax from the point of entry."

Collis sat up on his elbow and gazed at me.

"Have you been up all night, Dale?" he asked.

"Yes; what of that?"

"You are wounded yourself, and unfit for that sort of thing," he continued.

"I am all right; never mind about me," was my reply.

"It needs but a single glance to show that you are as bad as you can well be," was Collis's answer. "We cannot afford to allow you to knock yourself up."

"I am too restless to think of myself. I have made up my mind to pull Winton round this corner."

"Much chance of that," said Collis. "Winton's day has come. I thought badly of him the moment he was brought in. Your account is not encouraging."

"I wish we had a nurse here," I cried.

"By the way," said Collis, "one of the Red Cross Nurses is at Makdara. It is hopeless of course to think of getting her through the enemy, but I wish she was here. Yes, Dale, I will take the skiagraph, of course; that is if the patient can stay quiet during the operation. Even at the shortest time it will take fifteen minutes. I will be with you in half-an-hour or so, and then you must rest. I wish we had a capable woman on the scene. There are several wounded men in the fort besides Winton."

"If we could get a nurse, I should put Winton's case into her hands," I said, "and let the others manage as best they could.

You and I, Collis, could pull the rest round, but Winton requires constant attention."

"Aye, that he does," was the reply, "but as we have no chance of what we want, you and I must do the best we can. All right; I'll be with you soon."

During the remainder of that day Collis and I had our hands full. Several wounded men had been brought in, and we were busy from morning till evening. It takes a great deal to knock me up, but the wound in my shoulder brought on fever and weakness. I spent all the time I could spare at Winton's bedside, and Collis undertook the rest of the medical work.

The sick man's condition became more and more alarming as the hours went on; his temperature rose to 104, his pulse to 110, his respiration was 35 to the minute. Collis had already made an unsuccessful attempt to take a skiagraph. He brought the Röntgen Ray apparatus, and made the necessary arrangements, but at the end of seven and a half minutes he was obliged to give up the attempt. The patient was delirious, and it was impossible to keep him quiet.

Collis shook his head gravely at me as he left the room.

The light was burning dim, and I sat by the sick man's side.

"Is that you, Dale?" asked Winton.

"Yes, but don't speak, old fellow; I am close to you. If you want anything, raise your hand."

"I believe I am dying, Dale. God knows, I have wanted death badly, but, now that it has come, I——"

"Aye, that's right," I answered cheerily; "you want to live now, and live you shall. Collis and I are doing all we can for you, and in the morning, if you are less feverish, we mean to look through you with the Röntgen Rays. We shall soon extract the bullet when we have discovered its position."

He did not reply, but after a time said slowly:

"That night when I gave you my confidence I wrote her a letter. I felt that my hour might be near, and there were one or two things I wished to say. The letter is in my desk, signed and all. If I go you will give it to her?"

"Trust me, I will see to that. Now if you talk another word I shall leave you."

Soon afterwards he sank off into a troubled sleep. From this he awoke about midnight in high delirium. His temperature kept on rising, and I had little or no hope of pulling him through. As I was standing by his bedside I noticed that Collis had come into the room. Winton was muttering confused words; Valencia's name passed his lips once or twice. Collis looked from the sick man to me; then he came up and touched me on the shoulder.

"Can I see you in the passage for a moment?" he said; "a queer thing has happened."

"He cannot be left," I replied.

"I will send his orderly in. Now then, Dale, come."

Winton's orderly stole into the room and took his place by the sick man's side. I went out into the passage with Collis.

"What is up?" I asked. "How queer you look!"

"Small wonder—the most unaccountable, unexpected thing has hap-

pened. Did I not hear you say this morning that you would give the half of your kingdom, or some such expression, if you could only get a nurse, an English nurse, upon the scene?"

"Undoubtedly I did, but under the circumstances as well wish for the moon," was my reply.

"Dale, the moon is in your grasp; a nurse has come."

"A nurse!" I cried, "what do you mean?"

"Yes; a lady, a nurse, one of the Red Cross Nurses. She arrived a few moments ago. Come, you shall see her for yourself."

Collis's eyes sparkled, they were filled with a look both of humour and satisfaction. I followed him down a passage and into a room, the door of which was open. I looked round me, there was no woman present, but a boy, dressed as a drummer, erect and slim, was standing by a table.

"I do not see the nurse," I cried. I glanced behind me. Collis had vanished, "and I don't believe I know your face, my boy," I added, looking full at the lad who now stepped forward. "Perhaps you have come with the nurse. She is the pluckiest woman in creation if she has run the gauntlet of the tribesmen."

"The road on the Jordan side was free from the enemy. I had an escort of four friendly natives, and I managed to get here safely," was the reply. Then in a gentle voice, I heard these words: "*I am the nurse.*"

I started back in astonishment.

"Is this a practical joke?" I cried.

"It is no joke, but a rash experiment which has succeeded," continued the soft voice, "I put on this dress, for I did not dare to undertake the journey as an Englishwoman. I heard that you had had severe fighting, and that several of our men were wounded. I made up my mind to reach the fort or die in the attempt. The drummer's dress was the only one which would fit me. I put it on and



A boy, dressed as a drummer, was standing by a table.

left Makdara without taking counsel of any one. Outside the city I met some natives—I knew them. I had nursed the child of one of them not long before. The child's life was saved. I resolved to throw myself now on their mercy. They said they would help me. They wrapped one of the indigo-coloured chuddahs worn by their women all over my drummer's dress. Did the enemy see me, they would think I was one of their own women. We wandered about until dark, and then we managed to find our way into the fort. Here I am. Can I be useful?"

"Useful!" I cried. "Providence be thanked! That is all that I can say. I have been wanting a nurse more badly than words can express. We have some serious cases here, one in particular."

"Yes," answered the girl. She took off her drummer's cap, her dark hair curled tightly to her head.

"Dr. Collis told me one or two things," she continued, "but I do not know any particulars. He says that one of the officers is wounded."

"He is very seriously wounded," I replied. "Have you had much experience of surgical cases?"

"A little," she answered. "I have not been a Red Cross Nurse long, but I had previous training when in England. I am sorry I could not bring my nurse's dress, but the risk was too great. I have not even the chuddah, as I returned it to the native who lent it to me at the gate of the fort."

"The dress is not of the slightest consequence," I replied. "What we want are the hands and the brain. How soon, nurse, can you come on duty?"

"After I have had a bath and something to eat. Can I have a room to myself, and will you send me a cup of tea?"

I replied in the affirmative, and a moment later rushed off to consult with Collis over this queer development of events. The news had quickly spread all over the fort that one of the Red Cross Nurses had braved the dangers of the road between Makdara and the Makbal Fort, and had arrived in the dress of a drummer boy, prepared to undertake her duties to the full.

When half-an-hour later I knocked at the nurse's door, she opened it and stood bright and upright before me.

"I do not know your name," I said.

She paused for a moment, then said gently:

"Call me the Drummer Boy."

"But what is your name?"

"Sister Valencia."

"Valencia," I said with a start.

"Do you know anyone of the name?" she asked, "It is not very common."

"I do not know anyone of the name personally, but I happen to know about a lady who was called Valencia. Now you had better hear a few particulars with regard to your patient."

I then briefly recounted the progress of the case, and told her something about my fears. I said that much depended on whether we were successful in taking a skiagraph, and that we meant to have a try again in the morning. As I spoke I opened the door which led into Winton's room.

The sick man was lying in complete shadow, and the drummer stepped lightly across the room and stood behind the bed. Winton gave an indifferent glance in the direction where, as he supposed, a slim lad of fifteen was standing. Two white woman's hands were clasped tightly together, the cuffs of the regimental jacket looked queer above them. Suddenly the "Boy" bent forward and gazed at the sick man. I saw a quiver pass through her frame; she drew herself up very erect. Once more impelled by an overpowering curiosity, she bent forward, and peeped at the patient. She had now grown accustomed to the dim light, and could see each feature. Suddenly she reeled, and would have fallen if I had not caught her.

"His name, Dr. Dale?" she said, in a hoarse whisper.

"I forgot to mention it," I answered. "Winton—Captain Winton."

"Good God! Oh, God in Heaven—oh, my God!"

The head of the "Drummer Boy" rested on my arm. For a moment I thought she had fainted. I pushed forward a chair, and she sank into it. With a bewildering flash, the truth darted through my brain. Sister

Valencia, alias the "Drummer Boy," was the Valencia of Captain Winton's life.

"You must not disturb him now," I said, in an emphatic whisper. "Keep yourself-control. Here, come with me into the passage."

The "Boy" followed me at once.

"Now, listen," I said, the moment I had shut the door behind us; "I know your story; we have no time to discuss it now. Before you were married, your name was Valencia Ogilvie. After marriage, you became Valencia Pirbright. Your husband is——"

"I have left him," said the Nurse, bowing her head.

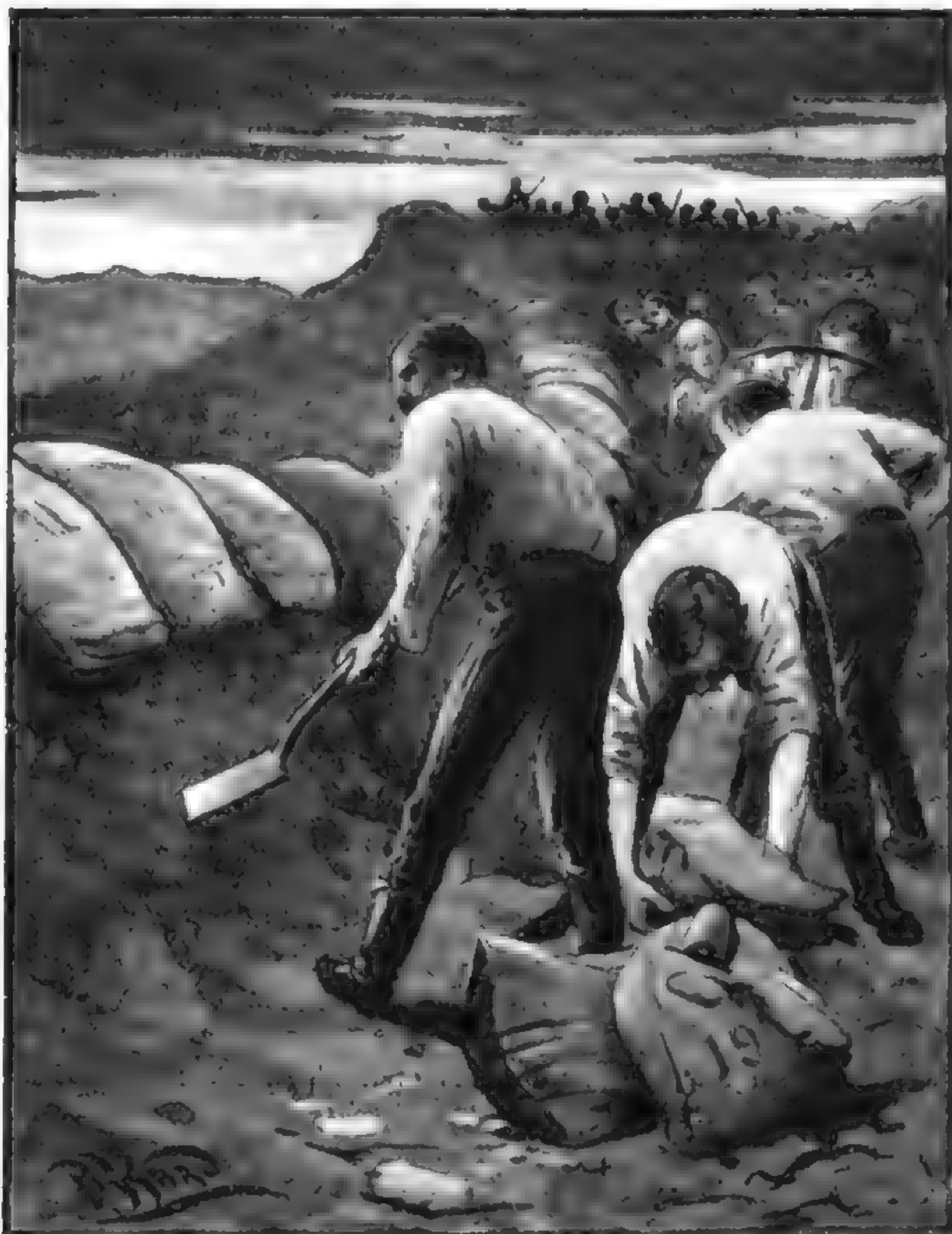
"And you have embraced your present profession?"

"He became unbearable; my life was in danger; I left him a year and a half ago.

Dr. Dale, is it possible that you know all?"

"I think I do know all. In a moment of agony, Captain Winton confided his history to me. Providence has brought you here, Sister Valencia; but, now remember, everything depends on your self-control. The man you have come to nurse is the pluckiest fellow in existence, but his life hangs in the balance, and he must not recognise you at present. He will think that you are one of the soldiers come to help me to nurse him. He thinks that there is no woman in the fort. Now go back to him; I am dead tired and shall try and get a little rest."

I slept that night and soundly. The next day dawned on a position of grave anxiety. Our force was busily engaged throwing up breast-works at the points most likely to be



Our force was busily engaged throwing up breast-works.

attacked, and Colonel Burton looked anxiously out for reinforcements.

Towards the afternoon five hundred men of the Guides arrived, and were eagerly welcomed. We were now well garrisoned and our force strong enough to repel the enemy.

Meanwhile Winton lay in the shadow of death, and the "Drummer Boy" watched by him day and night.

In the fort we never called Sister Valencia anything but the Drummer Boy. She was the best nurse I ever came across. She seemed impervious to fatigue. The tact which love bestows was hers. Winton used to follow her movements with his tired eyes, but he never spoke of her, never evinced the slightest curiosity at her presence, receiving her attentions as a matter of course.



"In the name of Providence, who are you?" he cried.

As the days wore on he became more and more delirious, his mutterings were weak and often unintelligible, the pneumonia increased, and the strength of the patient lessened. We made one or two attempts to take a skiagraph but in vain; the patient could not be kept still for a moment.

On the afternoon of a certain day, worn out myself from considerable inflammation and fever, I entered the small ward where Winton was lying, and threw myself down upon an empty camp bed at the opposite side of the room. The "Drummer Boy" stood between me and the window. Her pretty profile kept passing again and again before my mental vision. I looked at it fitfully, and thought of the tragedy of Winton's life. Unless a marvellous and unexpected change came over him, he would soon have done with the world. Was it possible that in the moment of death he would recognise the one who had administered to his last wants? I kept thinking these thoughts, wondering vaguely if any turn for the better were likely to take place, when all of a sudden I was startled by seeing the windows of the small room begin to shake violently. The next

instant, to my astonishment, I saw Winton raise himself and cry out in a tolerably loud voice:

"What is it? what is it?"

The nurse, who was standing by the window, went up to him at once, and took both his hands.

"Keep quiet," said the "Drummer Boy"; "it is only a thunderstorm." The voice, which had been carefully modulated, in order that Winton should not recognise it, now spoke out in its full, natural tones. It arrested the wandering attention of the sick man. He stared straight up into the eyes of the boy.

"In the name of Providence, who are you?" he cried; but then a light broke all over his face.

"Valencia, is this madness? Am I alive—are you really here?"

"I am here, and I will save you," was the reply.

The words were scarcely out of the brave girl's lips before there was a fearful crash. I thought the walls of the room would come down on us, and sprang to my feet, but before I could go a single step the ceiling split in two. I knew at once what had

occurred. We were in the thick of an earthquake. The sick man also sprang out of bed.

"Come, Valencia, come," he shouted. "This is an earthquake. Come out of the room at once."

Instead of replying, she put both her strong arms round him, and, dragging him back, pushed him with all her might under the bed. I was about to rush to her rescue, when down came the chimney, bringing with it mortar, *débris*, and bricks. A quantity of bricks and mortar fell over me, and, to my horror, I found I could not stir. I was not hurt, however, and shouted to the nurse to keep up her courage.

"Make for the window," I cried. "Save yourself if you can. Go, for Heaven's sake! You cannot rescue either of us. Go, or all is lost."

She just turned and gave me a glance.

"I will go after I have saved my patient," was her answer.

The bricks and mortar continued to fall, and then for a couple of minutes there was silence. The air was almost unbearable from the density of the dust, and the ground continued to heave awfully. Nurse Valencia's pluck, however, rose to the occasion. Slowly and painfully she dis-

engaged herself from the *débris* which partially covered her body, rushed to the window, and shouted for help.

The voice of a bearer was heard outside. He said he could not possibly reach the door, as it was blocked. She called to him to come to the window, to which she half dragged, half pushed Captain Winton, who was now unconscious.

He was a big fellow six feet high, and she was a slender girl. When she got him to the window she managed, with a strength which



"Now, doctor, I am going to liberate you."

was little short of a miracle, to lift him up and push him through into the bearer's arms. Having done this she turned her attention to me.

"Now, doctor, I am going to liberate you," she said.

"You have no time," I replied; "the walls of the room are falling in." It was positive agony to see her throwing away her life, but little she cared. With the strength of a mad woman she tore away the *débris* and bricks and soon managed to liberate my legs. The next moment I stood up and caught her in my arms.

"Come, it is my turn now," I said, "you have saved me and I will save you; you must not stay here another moment."

She wrestled away from me.

"What would the patient do if I thought only of myself?" she cried. "Here, help me with the bedclothes." She tore the blankets from the bed and threw them out of the window. She then pulled the mattress on to the floor.

"Help me, doctor, help me!" she cried.

I did so, and in a moment we had got the bed and blankets out. She then shouted to the bearer not to let the sick man lie on the damp grass, and went back to get some clothes. The walls were rocking and threatened to fall at any moment. Finally, with her arms full of clothing, she made her way to the window. I then lifted her in my arms, and this time she did not resist me. I pushed her out of the window and my own exit took place a moment later.

Her cheek was cut and bleeding, but there was a brightness in the eyes of that "Drummer Boy" which I have seldom seen equalled. The bearers and some soldiers who stood near were shouting out her praise in tones of admiration.

She gave me a quick glance, then bent over Winton. Winton was quite unconscious, and lay like one dead.

"Get brandy at once for the sahib," called the "Drummer Boy" to one of the bearers.

The man rushed off to do her bidding. The "Boy" knelt on the ground, put her arms round the soldier's neck, and laid her cheek against his. All my medical instincts were

aroused. The rain was coming down in sheets, and the one thing now was to secure coolies, make a sort of hammock, and carry Winton into a place of safety. This we managed to do.

The drummer and I worked side by side. We had no time to think of ourselves, nor of danger, nor the earthquake, nor the storm which raged around us. I do not believe we heard the storm.

As to the drummer, it needed but a glance at her face to show that she cared for nothing in all the world but the fate of the man whose life she had saved. Once she touched me on the sleeve.

"For God's sake, Dr. Dale, try to save him!" she whispered.

Just then Collis rushed in.

"Collis," I said, glancing into the face of my old friend, "you and I between us have got to save this man's life."

"For the sake of the 'Drummer Boy,' eh?" answered Collis.

I nodded. I am sure I saw moisture in his eyes. He bent down and examined the patient.

"He is unconscious from shock," he continued; "but I do not think he is any worse. Give me the brandy." He moistened Winton's lips with the stimulant, and a moment later the sick man opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he feebly asked in a whisper.

"You shall know all about that presently," answered Collis. "You have been saved by a miracle. Now keep quiet. See here, my lad"—Collis turned to the Boy—"you can place yourself in this chair and hold the sick man's hands if you like. Now then, Winton, you must swallow a little more brandy."

The patient did so, and strength and colour returned to his face. He began sensibly to revive. He looked better than I had seen him do since he was wounded.

"Brandy does wonders," said Collis, nodding to me.

I nodded back in reply; but, somehow, although I pretended to acquiesce, I never did think, and I do not think now, that the improvement in Winton was owing to the brandy.

I had more than once seen his eyes wander to the little hands which held his, then to the

sleeve of the "Drummer Boy's" coat, then up and up until they rested on the face with the wide open brown eyes and the steadfast mouth.

I am an old fool in my way. When I saw that look I had to rush to the door of the hut.

Well, the rest of the story is told in a few words. From that hour Winton took a turn for the better. His temperature became lower, and resolution of the pneumonia took place in a way I can only call marvellous.

Meanwhile the earthquake—the worst which had been known in India for a long time—had come to us as a terrible means of assistance. Many of the tribesmen had fled in terror, telegraphic communication was restored, and General Sir Henry Ford, who was at the head of affairs at Makdara, wired to us that he was sending some infantry and cavalry to our relief.

A week went by, and on a certain day a telegram was put into the "Drummer Boy's" hands. The "Boy" opened it eagerly, and read the brief contents with a white face.

Winton was much better now, and able to sit up. I was with him at the time. I saw his eager eyes fixed on the pale face of the boy. The boy turned, and went quickly out of the hut. Winton glanced at me.

"I am on the road to recovery, am I not, Doctor?"

"Most certainly you are. You will be as well and strong as ever in a short time," was my answer.

"Then I shall not need the services of the—the"—he paused a moment—"the *Drummer Boy* much longer?"

"Well, frankly, my lad, you will not; but——"

"Oh, I know what you are going to say, Dale. I have been speaking to him—to her, I mean—on the subject. Her nurse's dress will be sent here this evening; the drummer boy will go back into the shades of oblivion; and she—Sister Valencia—talks of returning to Makdara."

"But not if you want me," said a voice, and, looking up, we both saw the drummer standing at the foot of the bed.

"As there is a God in heaven, I want you, but I must do without you," said Winton hoarsely. "Yes, you had better go. But—Valencia—Valencia, what is the meaning of this?" For the nurse had fallen on her knees; her hands clutched those of the sick man; she covered them with kisses.

"There," she said, raising her eyes to mine, "read this; it was forwarded to me from Makdara, and was wired this morning from Calcutta."

She thrust the telegram into my hand.

I glanced at the little flimsy sheet, and read the following words aloud:

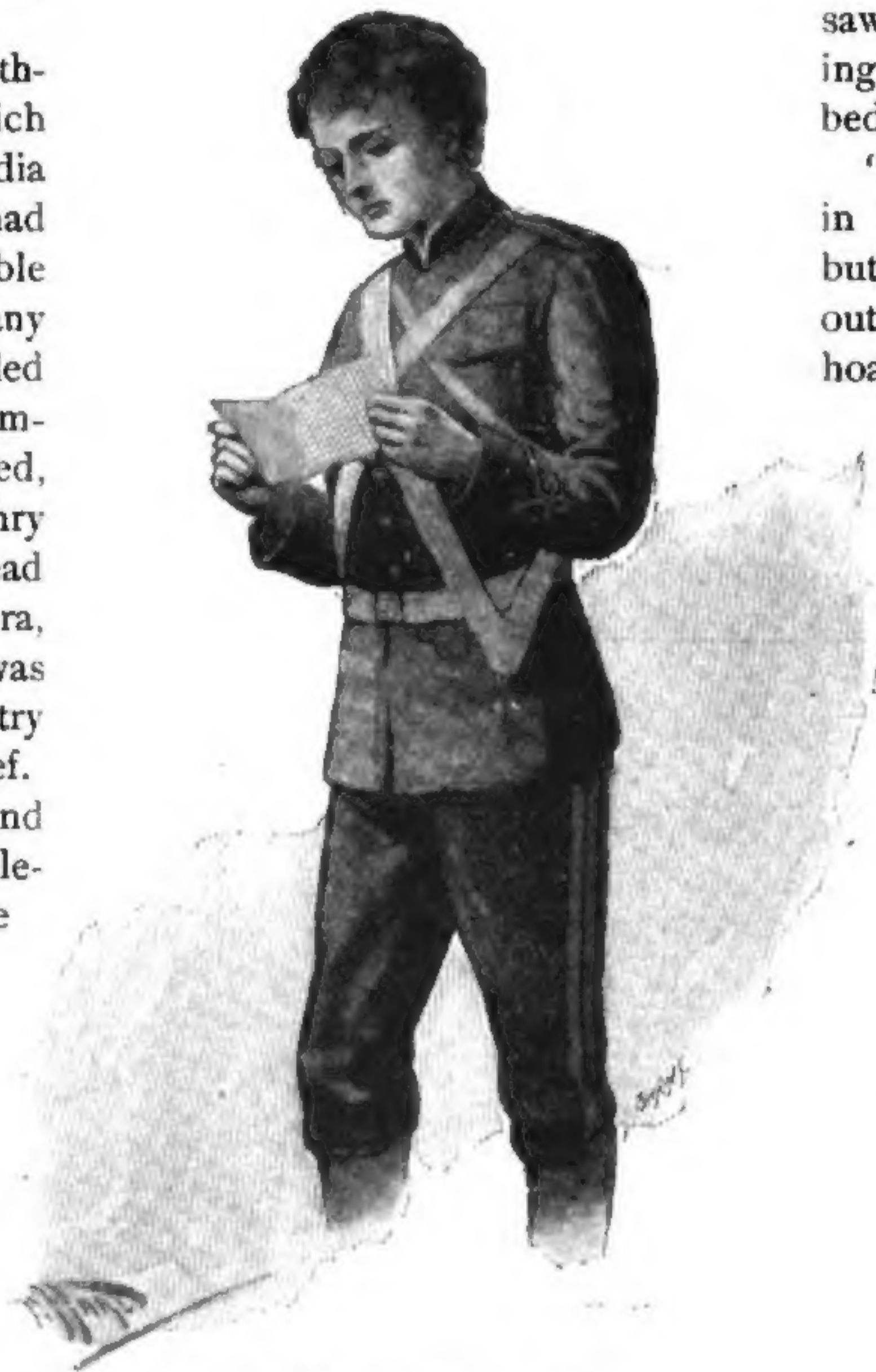
Colonel Pirbright had bad fall from his horse on the 10th inst. Died on the 12th, at midnight.

Before I could say a word, the "Drummer Boy" spoke:

"I cannot pretend to be sorry."

"Valencia!" said the sick man.

I left them.



The "Boy" opened it eagerly.